



THE COMMUNITY CHANGE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PRESENTATION GUIDE

2025





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ABOUT COMMUNITY CHANGE, INC & THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

Community Change, Inc. (CCI) is a New York State-based company whose mission is to support the survival and success of youth, families, communities, and the agencies that serve them. CCI does this through six services:

- [Youth Programs](#)
- [Parent & Family Engagement](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Course & Curriculum Development](#)
- [Organizational Development & Strategic Planning](#)
- [Fund Development & Grant Writing](#)

We support youth and families with education in the following content areas:

1. 21st Century Skills and Social-Emotional Learning Skills
2. Career Awareness/Career Explorations/Career Development/Job Readiness
3. Civic Engagement/Community Service/Service Learning
4. Culinary Arts
5. Cultural Awareness/Diversity, Belonging, Equity & Inclusion
6. Financial Literacy
7. Relationship Education/Restorative Practices/Conflict Management

CCI supports nonprofits, institutions of higher education, school districts, youth bureaus and other agencies through customized curricula and professional development. We also support these agencies by providing fund development and strategic planning services that builds their capacity to serve youth, parents/families, and communities.

Community Change, Inc. has three subsidiary companies: CareerVisions, Ltd., CareerVisions, NY and Professor A.I.

1. CareerVisions, Ltd. implements CCI's short-term, and year-to-year projects.
2. CareerVisions, NY, is CCI's nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization that implements CCI's state-wide, multi-year, grant-funded projects.
3. Professor A.I. is CCI's EdTech company that provides artificial intelligence-powered resources for teaching and learning. Professor A.I. also provides technological design services and solutions to address the organizational development needs of youth and community-serving agencies.



Vision Statement

Community Change envisions thriving communities where youth, families, and the organizations that serve them have what it takes—and do what it takes—to support their collective survival and success. We see young people in positions of power, leading industries and shaping the future in alignment with their passions.

Mission Statement

At Community Change, we are in the business of providing educational services in every setting possible—from classrooms and shelters to boardrooms and community spaces. Our mission is to make our community a better place to live by equipping youth, parents, and partner agencies with the tools, skills, and strategies to thrive.

Our distinctive approach—the Community Change Pedagogy—is a culturally responsive, project-based, social-emotional learning model that centers student identity, critical thinking, and community action. Through this framework, we offer:

- Educational programs that empower youth to solve real-world problems
- Professional development for educators and youth workers
- Organizational and fund development services for institutions serving vulnerable populations

Primary Mission:

To strengthen communities by fostering the growth and resilience of youth and families

Secondary Mission:

To prepare young people for positions of leadership and power

Tertiary Mission:

To support youth in mastering industries connected to their interests and ambitions

Goal

To cultivate self-directed learners who can understand, navigate, and positively impact their communities and the wider world through culturally responsive, project-based education.



Objectives

The Community Change Pedagogy is designed to:

1. Develop students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills
2. Strengthen research capacity across academic and real-world contexts
3. Build executive functioning and self-management skills to support long-term survival and success

Outcomes

As a result of this pedagogy, participants will:

- Engage deeply with real-world themes that reflect their identity, interests, and lived experiences
- Navigate all six phases of exploration, from personal inquiry to community-based action
- Analyze problems, evaluate root causes, and design meaningful, student-led interventions
- Demonstrate leadership, agency, and the ability to implement change in their communities

Community Change Core Values

1. Community – We believe the collective is stronger than the individual, and growth is rooted in connection.
2. Effectiveness – We focus on producing meaningful results and sustaining success across all initiatives.
3. Efficiency – We maximize impact by getting as much done as possible without wasting time, money, or other valuable resources.
4. Empowerment – We build the capacity of people to take control of their destiny and transform obstacles into opportunities for themselves and others.
5. Excellence – We pursue the highest quality and strive for the best results in everything we do.
6. Leadership – We cultivate vision, initiative, and service-minded influence in every learner and partner.
7. Learning – We value inquiry, innovation, and experimentation to cultivate lifelong growth.
8. Resilience – We champion survival, success, and long-term self-determination for all communities we serve.
9. Responsibility – We foster accountability, integrity, and ownership for our actions and the situations we face.

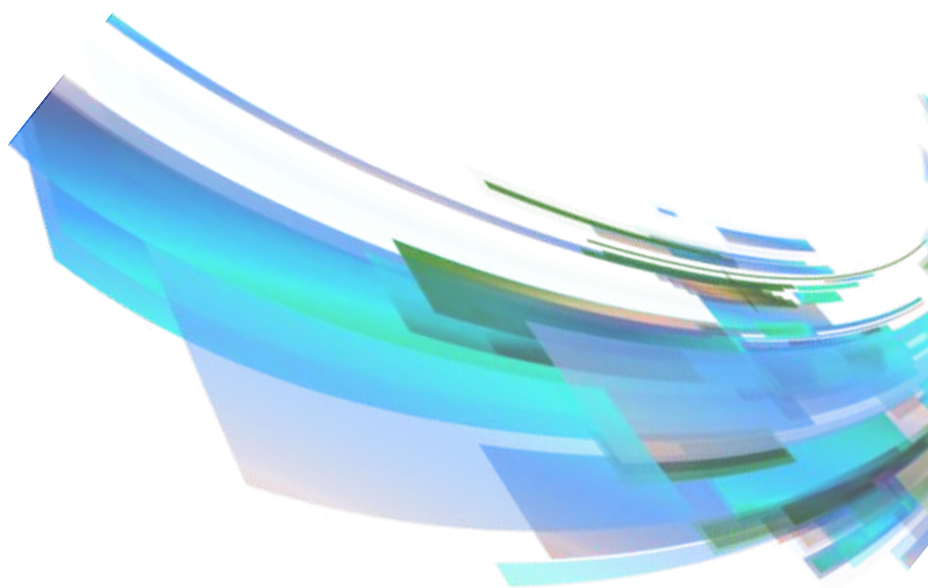


10. Strategic Thinking & Planning – We analyze internal and external factors to determine the best course of action for overcoming challenges and making vision a reality.

Educational Strategy: The Community Change Pedagogy

The Community Change Pedagogy is a culturally responsive, project-based, social emotional learning approach to education that:

- Follows six sequential phases to guide students through meaningful exploration of real-world themes such as careers, community issues, culture, 21st-century/life skills, economics, relationships, healthy eating, and the food industry.
- Begins with students' assets, interests, and identity (Phase 1) and culminates in community-engaged events and action projects (Phase 6).
- Is designed for use in K–12 classrooms, college courses, family literacy initiatives, and adult education programs.
- Each lesson is uniquely designed around three components: questions, references and exercises. These components combine to strengthen students' critical thinking/problem-solving (questions), research (references), and executive functioning/management skills (exercises).
- Integrates real-world content with academics and interest-based activities – creating meaningful, relevant lessons appropriate for any population in any educational setting.
- Lessons can be provided by the company, customized in pre-packaged curriculum, or created by the teacher using our A.I.-powered curriculum generator called Teacher PAI, creating lessons in minutes.





The 9 Community Change Pedagogy Approaches

1. **CareerVisions** – Engages students in career exploration while promoting job readiness and entrepreneurship based on their passions and strengths
2. **Community Change** – Engages students in civic education and service learning, empowering them to analyze and address their neighborhood concerns.



3. **Foodpreneurs** – Combines culinary arts with health and business education, enabling students to explore healthy eating and entrepreneurship in the food industry.
4. **Legacy** – Engages students to explore their cultural heritage and the diverse traditions of others.



5. **THE BLACK EXPERIENCE** – Engages students in learning about the various dimensions of the Black experience.



6. **The Latino EXPERIENCE** – Engages students in learning about the various dimensions of the Latino experience.



7. **Mastery** – Develops students in any 21st Century or life skill area to prepare them to survive and succeed in the global economy.

8. **Money Move\$** – Students learn about the world of investing and various ways to make money work for them, including cryptocurrency, stocks, and entrepreneurship.



9. **PEACE** – Engages students to explore conflict resolution, restorative practices, and healthy relationship-building at various levels of society.



The Youth Empowerment Project

Community Change, Inc. (CareerVisions, Ltd.) was contracted by New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) to work with youth leaders from across the city to develop an action plan for elevating student empowerment and improving the college and career readiness outcomes for highly vulnerable youth, with a focus on students in temporary housing and students in foster care. This involved engaging youth leaders from the five boroughs at a central location near NYCPS headquarters.

Students participated in five, full-day sessions to analyze the landscape of educational programs in New York City towards preparing a Youth Empowerment Action Plan to present it to NYCPS Deputy Chancellor Cristina Meléndez.

Special thanks to **Ayana Dewer** and **Kayla Morrow** of the NYCPS for fighting for and planning this important project that uplifts youth voice and lays the groundwork for accommodating their empowerment systemically; and to **Wayne Harris**, also of NYCPS, for being a consistent and dedicated force within the school system advocating for students in temporary housing.

Special thanks also to everyone who has supported this project so far...

Tim Agozie
Ammon Archie
Brian Artz
Maria Cepeda
Georgelina Cerdeno
Gabriel Gonzalez
Hina Kanwai
Keesha Lindsay
Michelle Lucero-Reyes
Sandra Lynch
Imani Marcano
Dr. Jayasree Nair
Sebastian Ochoa
Jim O'Toole
Carlos Patino
Roannelyn Paulino
Renita Anif Persuad
Thairis Rivas
Kyucca Salmon
TeQuan Smith
Kevin Wallace



Research Primer: Empowering High School Students Experiencing Homelessness and Foster Care in New York City

Introduction

Youth empowerment refers to strategies that equip young people with the skills, agency, and resources to influence decisions affecting their lives and communities (Zimmerman, 2000). Research has found that empowerment-based approaches increase student motivation, build leadership competencies, and improve outcomes—especially for vulnerable populations (Christens, 2019). It emphasizes active participation, leadership, and the belief that youth are not just future leaders—but current change agents. Zimmerman (2000) defines empowerment as a process by which individuals gain control over decisions and actions affecting their lives. For young people navigating homelessness or foster care, empowerment programs cultivate essential assets: emotional resilience, academic engagement, life skills, and self-advocacy. Empowerment is especially impactful when youth are engaged in civic action, educational co-design, and participatory research, rather than treated as passive recipients of services (Ozer, 2017). Youth empowerment emphasizes youth as partners—not just beneficiaries—in decision-making and problem-solving.

This is especially critical for high school students in temporary housing or foster care who often face marginalization, instability, and exclusion from decision-making systems. Empowerment enables these students to define their identities, connect with peers and mentors, and see themselves as capable of success despite adverse conditions. According to research, when students from vulnerable populations are given opportunities to lead and learn through meaningful civic engagement and culturally relevant curricula, they experience increased attendance, graduation rates, and mental health outcomes (Christens, 2019; Osofsky et al., 2021).

This primer outlines the principles, models, and local programmatic efforts—including the Community Change Pedagogy—that effectively promote youth empowerment for students in temporary housing and foster care.

New York City has one of the highest rates of student homelessness in the United States. In the 2022–2023 school year, over 100,000 students in New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) were identified as experiencing homelessness (Advocates for Children of New York [AFC], 2023). A significant portion of these students are in high school, facing enormous challenges in continuity of education, social-emotional stability, and future planning. Alongside them, youth in the foster care system often experience multiple school transitions, underrepresentation in school governance,



and limited access to long-term mentorship.

These overlapping vulnerabilities demand a comprehensive, empowerment-based educational response. This research primer shares models and strategies for youth empowerment, focusing on high school students in temporary housing or foster care, and situates this in the field of education in New York City.

Youth experiencing homelessness in New York City typically fall into three federally recognized categories under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: (1) those living in shelters (emergency or transitional), (2) those who are “doubled-up” with friends or relatives due to economic hardship, and (3) those who are unsheltered, meaning they sleep in public spaces, vehicles, or other places not meant for habitation. These groups often overlap and shift over time, reflecting the fluid and unstable housing conditions many youth endure.

A significant portion of these students are in high school, facing enormous challenges in continuity of education, social-emotional stability, and future planning. Alongside them, youth in the foster care system often experience multiple school transitions, underrepresentation in school governance, and limited access to long-term mentorship. These overlapping vulnerabilities demand a comprehensive, empowerment-based educational response. This research primer explores models and strategies for youth empowerment, focusing on high school students in temporary housing or foster care, and situates this within the work of NYCPS, ACS, and evidence-based frameworks like the Community Change Pedagogy.

NYCPS and ACS Initiatives

The New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) and the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) are two of the city’s most critical systems for children and youth. ACS oversees child welfare, juvenile justice, and family support services, including foster care and preventive care. NYCPS is the largest public school system in the United States, serving over 915,000 students across more than 1,800 schools. Its mission is to ensure all students graduate with the skills needed to thrive in college, careers, and life. ACS is New York City’s agency responsible for child welfare, juvenile justice, and early care services, including the oversight of foster care, prevention, and protective services. ACS serves over 8,000 children and youth in foster care annually (NYC ACS, 2022).

Both agencies offer programs that operate with the principle that youth who are engaged in defining their futures are more likely to stay in school, develop resilience, and succeed long-term. Within NYCPS, the Students in Temporary Housing (STH)



Unit ensures that students facing housing instability receive equitable access to education. The STH Unit provides a vital layer of support—including enrollment guidance, transportation coordination, and staff training—across hundreds of schools. The STH Unit connects students to a citywide network of culturally responsive, wraparound programs specifically designed to address the unique needs, interests, and challenges of students experiencing housing instability.

Youth empowerment is vital to ACS's mission: empowering young people in care to make decisions about their lives improves placement stability, educational outcomes, and successful transitions to adulthood. ACS initiatives like Fair Futures, JustUs, and its Youth Leadership Councils give youth in care structured opportunities to shape programming and policy.

What Is YPAR? (Youth Participatory Action Research)

In 2019, under then Executive Director Mike Hickey, The STH Unit engaged in a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project for students in temporary housing using the Community Change Pedagogy; roughly five years later, a similar initiative has been launched by the Division of Family, Community, and Student Empowerment under the leadership of Deputy Chancellor Dr. Cristina Meléndez to ensure students—particularly those most marginalized—have pathways to self-advocacy, influence policy, and drive system change. Dr. Meléndez has explicitly focused on youth empowerment as a strategy for equity, recognizing that student voice is central to reimagining public education and addressing systemic inequities, especially for those in foster care and temporary housing.

YPAR is a dynamic, youth-led research methodology that empowers young people to study and respond to the social issues that affect their lives. It is grounded in participatory action research and critical pedagogy, encouraging youth to become researchers, analysts, and advocates. YPAR challenges traditional research hierarchies by positioning students as co-creators of knowledge rather than passive subjects (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

The core objective of YPAR is not only to understand community issues but also to produce actionable knowledge that leads to change. The method has proven particularly effective among marginalized youth, including those in foster care and temporary housing, by increasing engagement, civic participation, and personal agency (Ozer, Newlan, Douglas, & Hubbard, 2013).



YPAR follows a structured process:

1. **Identifying the Issue** – Students reflect on their lived experiences and community needs to define relevant social issues.
2. **Formulating a Research Question** – Youth narrow their focus to a specific, researchable question that can inform action.
3. **Gathering and Analyzing Data** – Methods may include interviews, surveys, focus groups, or arts-based inquiry; students learn how to collect and interpret data.
4. **Sharing Findings** – Youth create public products (e.g., presentations, reports, digital media) to share insights with peers, educators, and policymakers.
5. **Taking Collective Action** – Based on findings, students design and implement strategies to address the issue through campaigns, programs, or advocacy.

YPAR empowers youth to shift from subjects of intervention to agents of systemic change. For students in unstable housing or foster care, this approach offers both a voice and a vehicle for transforming their conditions.

The challenges faced by high school students in temporary housing and foster care are substantial—but not insurmountable. As this research primer illustrates, youth empowerment is not simply a feel-good initiative but an evidence-based, equity-driven strategy to improve long-term outcomes for NYC’s most vulnerable students. The Community Change Pedagogy, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), and the citywide network of culturally responsive, wraparound programs show what is possible when we center youth as agents of change.

Empowerment-based models must continue to be scaled, funded, and embedded system-wide. The task ahead is clear: to ensure every student—not just the most privileged—has the power, voice, and resources to shape their future. faced by high school students in temporary housing and foster care are substantial—but not insurmountable. As this research primer illustrates, youth empowerment is not simply a feel-good initiative but an evidence-based, equity-driven strategy to improve long-term outcomes for NYC’s most vulnerable students. The Community Change Pedagogy, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), and the citywide network of culturally responsive, wraparound programs show what is possible when we center youth as agents of change.

Given the volume of NYCPS students, the scale of potential impact is enormous. Empowerment-based models must continue to be scaled, funded, and embedded system-wide. The task ahead is clear: to ensure every student—not just the most privileged—has the power, voice, and resources to shape their future.



Key Elements of Effective Youth Empowerment Programs

Effective youth empowerment programs share several foundational elements that are supported by research and practice. These components work in combination to create environments where young people can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally—especially those navigating foster care or housing instability. Below is a breakdown of the five most critical elements, including definitions and five NYC-based examples for each. Each organization listed also includes its website.

1. **Youth-Centered Approach** Youth-centered programs are designed with young people, not just for them. This model gives youth real power in shaping goals, designing activities, and evaluating success. It strengthens self-worth, trust, and ownership.

The Brotherhood/Sister Sol: Empowers youth to co-create social justice agendas. Website: <https://brotherhood-sistersol.org>

- Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC): High school students lead citywide policy campaigns. Website: <https://urbanyouthcollaborative.org>
- Teens Take Charge: Youth organize policy forums and school integration demands. Website: <https://teenstakecharge.com>
- Intergenerational Change Initiative: Students collect and publish the annual NYC Youth Agenda. Website: <https://newschool.edu/icic>
- DOE Youth Leadership Councils: Youth advise public agencies on education, health, housing. Website: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/get-involved/students/student-voice/youth-leadership-councils>
- Global Kids: Combines human rights education with afterschool support. Website: <https://globalkids.org>

2. **Comprehensive Support Services** These programs offer wraparound support—academic help, mental health care, meals, transportation, and legal services—to address all dimensions of youth development.

- Broome Street Academy Charter High School: Integrates support for foster and housing-insecure youth. Website: <https://broomestreetacademy.org>
- The Door NYC: Offers job readiness, legal services, education, and housing under one roof. Website: <https://door.org>
- Safe Horizon Streetwork Project: Emergency shelter, case management, and educational services. Website: <https://safehorizon.org>
- Covenant House NYC: Trauma-informed housing and educational programming. Website: <https://www.covenanthouse.org/homeless-charity/new-york>



3. **Stable and Trusting Relationships** Long-term, consistent relationships with adult mentors or coaches are foundational to healing and empowerment, especially for youth who've experienced trauma or displacement.
 - Fair Futures: Youth in foster care matched with a dedicated coach from age 11–26. Website: <https://fairfuturesny.org>
 - Bro/Sis Rites of Passage: Mentorship through culturally-rooted, multi-year programs. Website: <https://brotherhood-sistersol.org>
 - Girls for Gender Equity (GGE): Partners with Black and Brown youth through sustained coaching. Website: <https://www.ggenyc.org>
 - Covenant House NYC: Staff provide trauma-informed, consistent care for homeless youth. Website: <https://www.covenanthouse.org/homeless-charity/new-york>
 - Global Kids: Long-standing mentorship from trained educators. Website: <https://globalkids.org/>

4. **Skill Development Opportunities** These programs provide training in academic, vocational, civic, and leadership skills, preparing youth for adulthood, advocacy, and economic self-sufficiency.
 - Expanded Schools Pathways Fellowship: Trains high schoolers to work in youth programs. Website: <https://www.exploringpathways.org>
 - Girls Who Code NYC: Teaches coding and STEM confidence to girls and non-binary youth. Website: <https://girlswhocode.com>
 - SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program): Paid work, workforce readiness, and mentoring. Website: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/jobs-internships/summer-youth-employment-program-syep.page>
 - YOU(th) Decide NY!: Builds public health advocacy skills in youth. Website: <https://oasas.ny.gov/youth-decide>
 - Bro/Sis Environmental Justice Institute: Trains youth in climate justice and civic organizing. Website: <https://brotherhood-sistersol.org/>

5. **Cultural Competency and Inclusivity** Effective programs respect and reflect the identities, languages, traditions, and lived experiences of youth, especially those from marginalized communities.
 - Ali Forney Center: LGBTQ+ inclusive support for youth experiencing homelessness. Website: <https://www.aliforneycenter.org>
 - Bro/Sis: Rooted in African Diaspora culture, identity, and liberation practices. Website: <https://brotherhood-sistersol.org>
 - El Puente: Focuses on Latinx youth, arts activism, and cultural preservation. Website: <https://elpuente.us>



- Global Kids: Empowers immigrant and multilingual youth via international policy. Website: <https://globalkids.org>
- DOE DREAM-SHSI: Supports access to specialized high schools for underserved students. Website: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/specialized-high-schools/dream-program>

Barriers to Participation

Barriers to participation refer to the obstacles that prevent youth—especially those experiencing homelessness or in foster care—from fully engaging in empowerment programs or educational services. These barriers are structural and systemic, often compounding one another.

- **Transportation issues:** Many students in temporary housing live far from school or program sites and lack access to reliable or affordable transit. Missed buses or subway fare insecurity often result in chronic absenteeism.
- **Unresolved trauma and mental health needs:** Youth who have experienced displacement, abuse, or neglect often struggle with depression, anxiety, or PTSD. Without access to trauma-informed mental health services, participation in programs may feel overwhelming or unsafe.
- **Lack of program awareness:** Many students and families don't know that youth empowerment programs or supportive services exist. Outreach is often inconsistent or fails to reach students living in shelters or other transitional settings.
- **Frequent school transfers or shelter moves:** High mobility disrupts relationships with teachers and mentors. When students are uprooted regularly, it becomes difficult to sustain participation in multi-session or relationship-based programs.
- **Stigma and fear of disclosure:** Youth may avoid services labeled for "homeless students" due to fear of judgment or social consequences. This stigma can cause students to hide their circumstances and reject help, even when it's needed.
- **Competing interests and seasonal distractions:** Some students are already enrolled in programs that start earlier in the school year—often due to prior funding commitments—making them unavailable for programs with delayed launches. In addition, as weather warms and the school year winds down, students may become more engaged in informal or recreational activities, reducing interest in academic or empowerment programming.



Challenges for Programs

Challenges for programs refer to the systemic, financial, and operational difficulties that prevent youth-serving organizations from consistently delivering high-quality, empowerment-centered services.

- **Funding limits, delays, and short grant cycles:** Many programs operate on one- or two-year grants, making long-term planning difficult. Inconsistent funding leads to staff cuts, reduced services, or program closure—just as youth are beginning to build trust. Moreover, delays in budget approvals at the city level can postpone program start dates. In some cases, funding is not released until midyear—or even spring—at which point student attendance in out-of-school time programming tends to decline. These delays reduce the program’s window of impact and undermine youth momentum. Many programs operate on one- or two-year grants, making long-term planning difficult. Inconsistent funding leads to staff cuts, reduced services, or program closure—just as youth are beginning to build trust.
- **Difficulty securing program space in schools or shelters:** Many schools and shelters are unable to accommodate programs due to physical space constraints, staff capacity, or competing priorities. Administrative concerns over supervision, liability, or alignment with instructional goals can also delay program approval. As a result, identifying host sites is time-consuming and can significantly delay program launch and continuity.
- **High staff turnover affecting youth-adult trust:** Students in foster care or housing instability often already struggle with attachment. When program staff change frequently, it reinforces a sense of abandonment and erodes continuity of care.
- **Difficulty tracking long-term outcomes:** Transient populations can be hard to track for follow-up data. Programs often lack the infrastructure to collect consistent attendance, graduation, or employment outcomes, making it harder to demonstrate impact.
- **Limited cross-agency data sharing:** NYCPS, ACS, shelters, and CBOs often work in silos. Legal and bureaucratic restrictions limit how data is shared—preventing holistic support or seamless transitions between programs.
- **Conflicting regulations and policies:** Agencies operate under different rules (e.g., DOE’s FERPA vs. ACS confidentiality), which can prevent programs from tailoring interventions or collaborating effectively.

Conclusion

The challenges faced by high school students in temporary housing and foster care are complex and interrelated, yet they are not insurmountable. As this research primer illustrates, youth empowerment is a rigorously supported, outcome-oriented



approach that strengthens engagement, educational attainment, and long-term self-efficacy among young people who face systemic barriers to stability and inclusion.

Initiatives such as the Community Change Pedagogy, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), and other culturally responsive, wraparound models provide not only essential supports but also structured pathways for youth to exercise agency in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways. Of these, YPAR is particularly well-positioned to address the persistent disconnect between program design and lived student experience. Its methodology transforms student-led inquiry into actionable insight that can influence public education systems at scale.

Widespread integration of YPAR within New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) programs would establish a continuous, youth-informed feedback loop—helping to ensure that educational interventions are responsive, relevant, and grounded in the real conditions facing students. Such integration also aligns with broader policy goals of equity and shared governance, positioning NYCPS as a system that listens to, learns from, and adapts with its students.

Importantly, the academic and social benefits of youth empowerment are well-documented. Empowered students demonstrate increased school attendance, greater motivation to learn, stronger performance on academic assessments, and higher high school completion rates. Socially, they report improved emotional regulation, stronger relationships with peers and adults, and greater confidence in navigating both school and life challenges (Christens, 2019; Ozer, 2017). These outcomes reinforce the critical role that youth-centered practices play in promoting not only equity, but excellence.

The opportunity for meaningful system-wide transformation between the NYCPS and ACS is substantial. The recommendation here is for youth empowerment to be treated as a foundational educational strategy—central to advancing inclusion, elevating student voice, and securing measurable academic and developmental outcomes for students facing instability and other distressed populations.

Tips for Engaging Schools & Communities in YPAR

Engaging schools and communities in **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)** is essential to ensuring that youth-led work results in real-world impact. The goal is not only to elevate student voices, but to bring adults into the process as listeners, learners, and allies. Below are strategies to build authentic partnerships and amplify student-led findings.



- **Present at parent nights or school leadership team meetings**
These platforms are powerful opportunities for students to showcase their research to decision-makers and caregivers. Presentations can include student narratives, data findings, and proposed solutions to real issues affecting youth.
- **Partner with CBOs (community-based organizations) to expand reach**
Collaborating with trusted community organizations ensures broader participation and stronger local impact. These partners can offer space, resources, mentorship, and credibility that deepen the reach of student-led initiatives.
- **Invite adult allies to act as listeners, not directors**
Adults play an important role—but in YPAR, their job is to support rather than steer. Invite teachers, principals, and district staff to attend student sessions as observers, note-takers, or panelists who reflect back what they've learned from youth—not what they think should happen next.
- **Use digital platforms (videos, maps, slides) to make the findings student-led and powerful**
Visual storytelling tools allow students to own the narrative. When youth present their research using multimedia formats—such as videos, infographics, interactive slides, or digital maps—it captures attention and communicates complex findings with clarity and authenticity.

Tools and Resources

To support student research and adult partnership, these YPAR tools offer frameworks, worksheets, and best practices from the field. Whether you're starting from scratch or refining a project, these resources provide valuable guidance for structuring inquiry and sharing findings.

- **YPAR Hub Toolkit** – <https://yparhub.berkeley.edu>
Created by UC Berkeley, this hub offers step-by-step guides, sample questions, and facilitation tips to structure a complete YPAR cycle—from question development to data collection to action.
- **Youth Voices Research Toolkit (NYC-based)** – <https://www.youthvoices.live>
Built for New York City youth and educators, this platform combines blogging, digital storytelling, and civic research to help students amplify their voices online and in their communities.
- **Participatory Research Guide (Urban Youth Collaborative)** – <https://urbanyouthcollaborative.org/resources>
This guide offers accessible, culturally relevant materials on how to co-create research with young people and build power for educational justice across NYC schools.



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How to Use This Guide

This guide is organized into six sequential phases that reflect the Community Change Pedagogy — a culturally responsive, project-based, and social-emotional learning model that integrates academics and interest-based activities with real-world applications. Each phase contains a curated sequence of Lessons designed to develop critical thinking, research, and executive functioning skills using a unique blend of questions, references, and exercises.

The Six Phases of Exploration:

- **Phase 1: Identity, Interests & Assets** – Students engage in self-discovery and vision-setting to identify strengths and goals.
- **Phase 2: Interpersonal Skills, Leadership & Personal Branding** – Focuses on building communication, confidence, and leadership presence.
- **Phase 3: Professionalism** – Teaches students how to present themselves effectively in academic and workplace settings.
- **Phase 4: Exploring College Opportunities & Campus Life** – Helps students research and navigate postsecondary pathways and environments.
- **Phase 5: Financing Education & Mastering Academic Success** – Builds financial literacy and essential study skills to support college persistence.
- **Phase 6: Action** – Guides students through showcasing their learning, leading events, and preparing for real-world application.

Each lesson follows a consistent Community Change Pedagogy format:

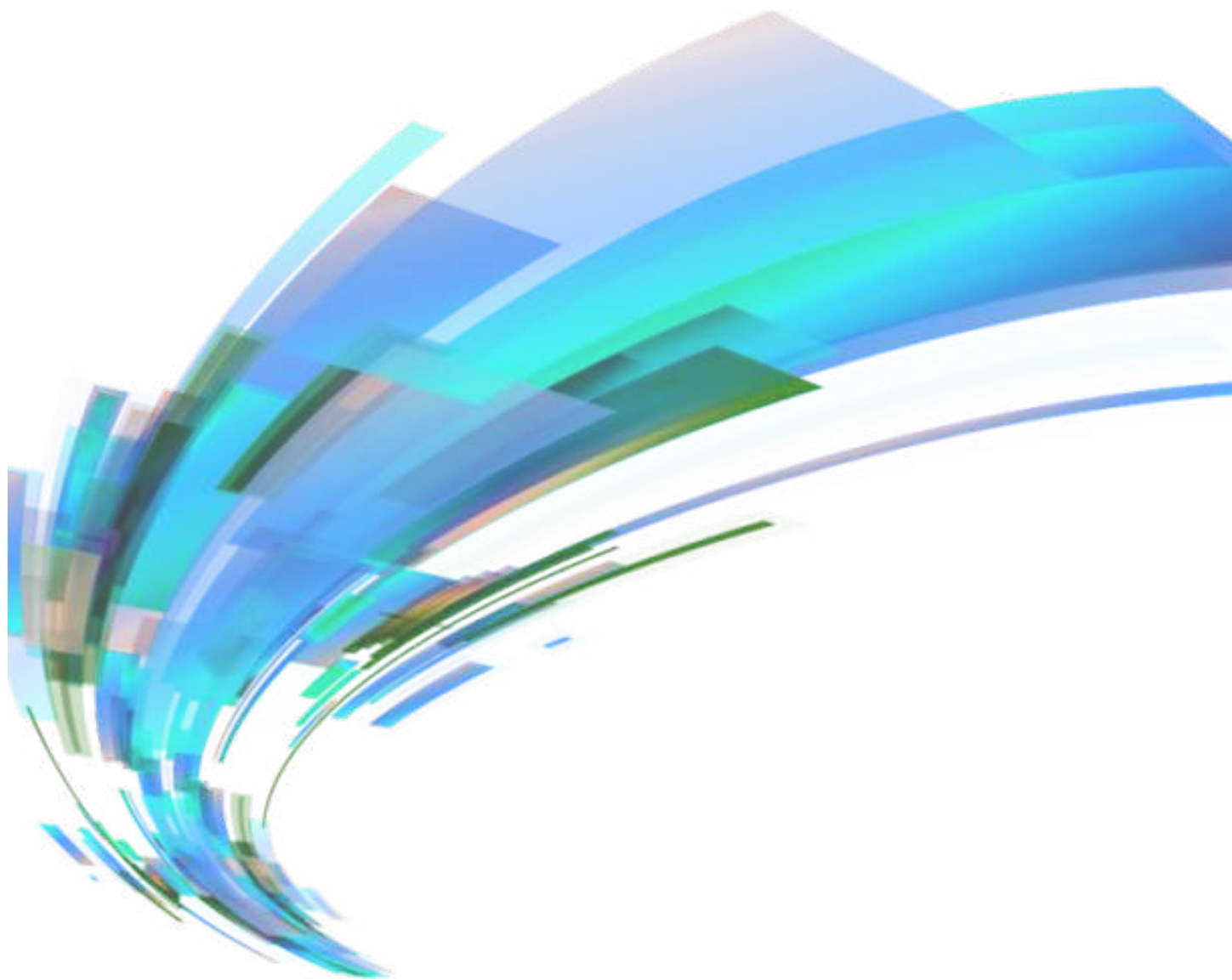
1. **Welcome** – Introduces the day's focus.
2. **Icebreaker** – A movement-based activity to build engagement.
3. **Exploratory Exercise** – Promotes analysis using a question and a reference (article or video).
4. **Expression Exercise** – Encourages students to apply learning creatively.
5. **Review** – Summarizes key takeaways.
6. **Reflection** – Provides space for personal growth and next steps.



Supplementary Resources

To further support implementation, this guide includes three additional elements:

1. **Tip Sheets** – Provide research-based strategies, New York City-specific resources, and contact information relevant to the lesson topic.
2. **Worksheets** – Allow students to track and apply their findings from the Exploratory Exercise and engage with a custom-designed puzzle or word game to reinforce key concepts in a fun and challenging way.
3. **Assessment Tools** – Offered for each phase to evaluate student understanding and growth over time.



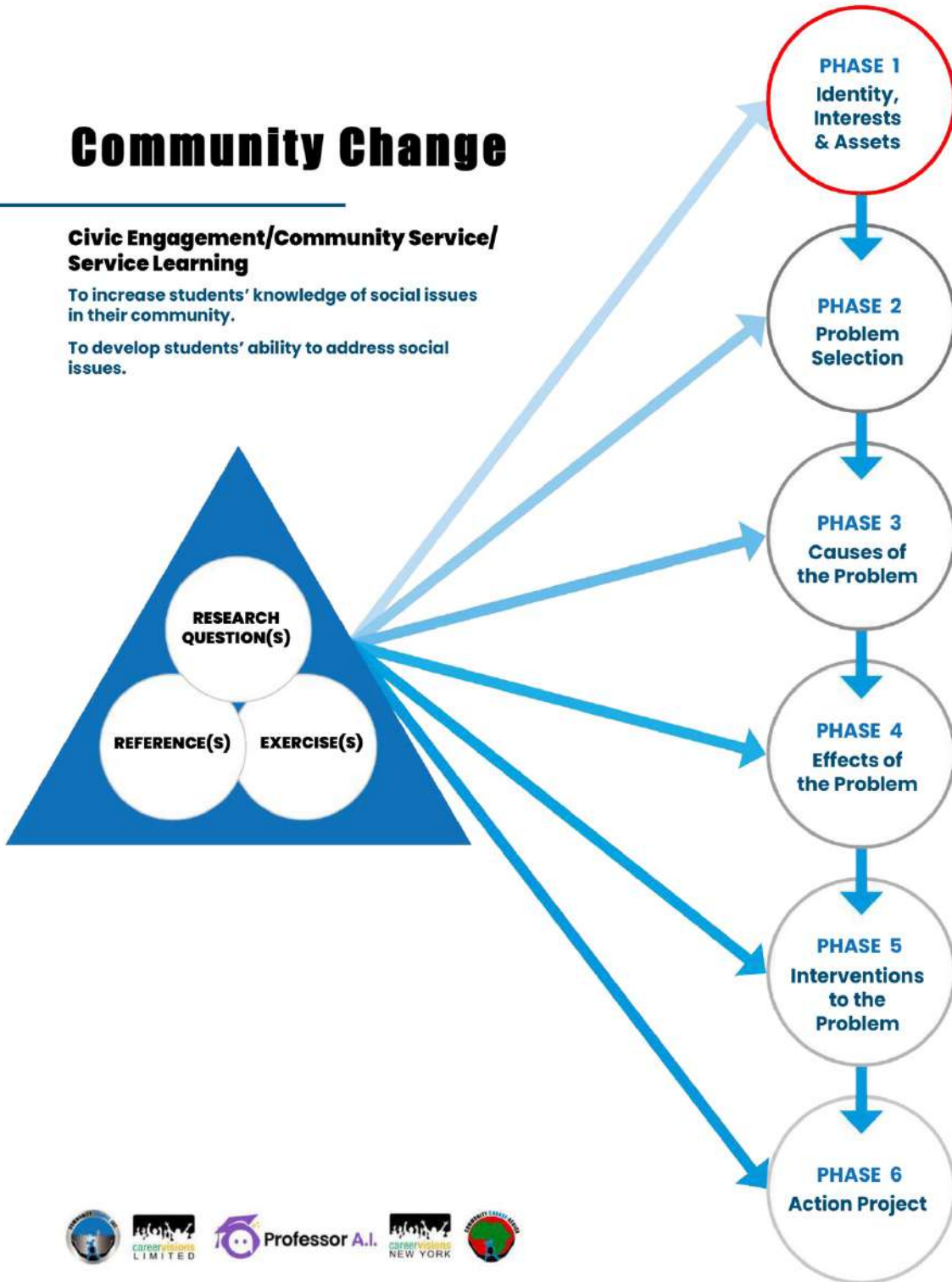
Phase 1: Identity, Interests and Assets

Community Change

Civic Engagement/Community Service/ Service Learning

To increase students' knowledge of social issues in their community.

To develop students' ability to address social issues.





| Lesson 1: Introduction

Objective:

- Introduce students to the Community Change Model and its six-phase structure.
- Build a sense of community by highlighting students' individual strengths.
- Begin identifying shared challenges and opportunities for improving support systems for students in temporary housing.
- Inspire students to envision an ideal school experience and understand the purpose of their future action plan.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"You are here because your voice matters. Together, we will explore ways to elevate student empowerment and improve opportunities for students like you."*
 - Introduce the Community Change Model and its six-phase structure:
 - Phase 1: Identity, Interests & Assets
 - Phase 2: Problem Selection
 - Phase 3: Causes of the Problem
 - Phase 4: Effects of the Problem
 - Phase 5: Interventions to the Problem
 - Phase 6: Action Project
 - Explain the end goal: *"Everything we do will lead up to a final action plan and a presentation to Cristina Meléndez, Deputy Chancellor of Family, Community, and Student Empowerment."*

2. Icebreaker: "One Word to Describe Me" (2 min)

- Activity:
 - Students share their name and one word that describes them (e.g., "I'm Jordan, and I'm creative.").
 - Facilitator encourages reflection:
 - *"Every word you just shared represents strength. Over the next few weeks, we'll use these strengths to build solutions together."*
 - Write student responses on a whiteboard or chart paper for reference throughout the program.

3. Exploratory Exercise: "Our Shared Experience" (20 min)



- Framing Question: *What challenges do students in temporary housing face in school, and what strengths do we bring to overcome them?*

Activity Steps:

1. Think & Write:
 - Each student writes one challenge and one strength on sticky notes or index cards.
 - Examples:
 - Challenge: *"Moving schools often makes it hard to keep up."*
 - Strength: *"I can adapt quickly to new environments."*
2. Small Group Discussion:
 - Students break into groups of 3-4 to discuss their challenges and strengths.
3. Whole Group Sharing:
 - Each group shares one challenge and one strength with the class.
 - Facilitator records responses on a large sheet of paper or board, organizing them into themes.
4. Connecting the Dots:
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"What do we notice about these challenges?"*
 - *"How do our strengths help us face these challenges?"*
 - *"What would school look like if it fully supported students like us?"*

4. Expression Exercise: "Creating Our Vision" (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *"If we could design a school that fully supports students like us, what would it look like?"*

Activity Options (Students Choose One):

1. Draw It – Create a simple sketch of an ideal school/classroom.
2. Describe It – Write a short description of their vision (e.g., "A school where students have counselors who understand them and transportation to get to school.").
3. Act It Out – In pairs, role-play a 30-second conversation between a student and a supportive school leader.

Sharing & Discussion (Encouraged, Not Required):

- Volunteers present their vision.
- Facilitator highlights common themes that emerge.
- Connecting to the Future:
 - *"These ideas will shape our action plan. Today is the first step toward making change happen."*



5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one thing you learned about yourself today?
 2. What is one challenge that stood out to you?
 3. What is one idea that excites you for future lessons?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"Each lesson will help us build solutions together, leading up to presenting our ideas to Deputy Chancellor Cristina Meléndez."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes or shares one small action they can take before the next session to strengthen their voice or confidence.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will share an idea in class."*
 - *"I will ask my counselor about college programs."*
 - *"I will think about what changes I'd want in my school."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Every small step matters. Your voice, ideas, and experiences are shaping the future for students like you."*





| Lesson 2: "Mapping Our Journeys"

Objective:

- Help students identify common experiences of youth in temporary housing.
- Allow students to reflect on their personal journeys and recognize their resilience.
- Encourage students to visualize their future goals in school and life.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"In our last session, we explored who we are and why we're here. Today, we'll look at our personal journeys—where we've been, what we've overcome, and where we want to go."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"Everything we do in these sessions builds toward creating a powerful action plan that will be presented to Deputy Chancellor Cristina Meléndez."*

2. Icebreaker: "Step Forward If..." (2 min)

- Activity:
 - The facilitator reads statements about common experiences students in temporary housing might have had.
 - If the statement applies to them, they take one step forward or raise their hand.

Sample Statements:

- *"I have moved schools more than once in the last two years."*
 - *"I have traveled long distances just to get to school."*
 - *"I have had to do homework in a place that wasn't my home."*
 - *"I have struggled to stay connected with friends because of moving."*
 - *"I have felt like my teachers or school staff didn't understand my situation."*
- Facilitator closes with:
 - *"Look around. You are not alone. Many of us share similar challenges, but that also means we can learn from each other and find ways to support change."*



3. Exploratory Exercise: "Mapping Our Journeys – Timeline Activity" (20 min)

- Framing Question: *What key moments have shaped your journey in school and life?*

Activity Steps:

1. Introduce the Timeline Concept:
 - Facilitator explains that life is a journey, and we all have moments that shaped us—both challenges and successes.
2. Draw or Write Personal Timelines:
 - Students create a timeline of their school journey, marking key events such as:
 - Changing schools
 - Meeting an important mentor or friend
 - Overcoming a challenge
 - A moment of success or pride
3. Small Group Sharing:
 - In pairs or small groups, students share one or two moments from their timeline.
4. Whole-Group Reflection:
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"What do we notice about our journeys?"*
 - *"What moments made a difference for you—positive or negative?"*
 - *"How can we use our experiences to help improve school experiences for others?"*

4. Expression Exercise: "Where I Am vs. Where I Want to Be" (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *"No matter where we come from, we all have dreams. Today, we'll visualize where we are now and where we want to go."*

Activity Options (Students Choose One):

1. Draw It:
 - Students create two simple sketches:
 - "Where I am now" (their current situation in school/life).
 - "Where I want to be" (their future goals—college, career, stability, success).
2. Write It:
 - Students complete these sentence starters:
 - *"Right now, I feel like..."*
 - *"In the future, I want to..."*
 - *"One thing that can help me get there is..."*



3. Act It Out:

- In pairs, one student plays their "current self" and the other plays their "future self."
- They create a short scene showing how they transition from one to the other.

Sharing & Discussion:

- Volunteers present their work if they feel comfortable.
- Facilitator highlights common goals and aspirations among students.

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one thing that stood out about our journeys?
 2. What is one goal you want to work toward?
 3. What is one thing that can help you get there?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:
"Each lesson helps us get closer to building a real plan for change. We will take our experiences and use them to create solutions for students like us."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one small action they can take to move toward their future goal.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will ask my teacher about a college prep program."*
 - *"I will set a goal for improving my grades this semester."*
 - *"I will talk to my school counselor about career options."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Your journey matters. Every small step brings you closer to your goals, and your voice is powerful in shaping change."*



| Lesson 3: "Building Confidence & Public Speaking"

Objective:

- Help students build self-confidence in speaking and expressing their ideas.
- Explore the qualities of a strong leader and how communication plays a key role.
- Provide students with real-world advocacy practice through role-playing.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"Strong leadership starts with strong communication. Today, we'll practice using our voices with confidence—because your voice is powerful."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"Everything we do in these sessions builds toward creating a powerful action plan that will be presented to Deputy Chancellor Cristina Meléndez."*

2. Icebreaker: "Say It With Strength" (2 min)

- Activity:
 - Facilitator writes a simple phrase on the board: "I deserve to be heard."
 - Students take turns saying the phrase out loud, but with a challenge:
 - First, in a whisper
 - Second, in a normal voice
 - Third, in a confident, strong voice
 - Facilitator asks: *"How did it feel saying it each time? What changed?"*
- Purpose:
 - Demonstrates the power of voice and confidence.
 - Encourages students to step out of their comfort zone in a low-risk activity.

3. Exploratory Exercise: "What Makes a Strong Leader?" (20 min)

- Framing Question: *What skills and qualities make someone a strong leader and communicator?*

Activity Steps:

1. Brainstorming:
 - Facilitator asks: *"Who is someone you admire as a leader? What makes them strong?"*
 - Write student responses on a chart paper or whiteboard.



- Expected responses: *"They are confident, they listen, they stand up for others, they speak clearly."*
- 2. Small Group Discussion:
 - Break into small groups (3–4 students).
 - Each group chooses one leadership quality and answers:
 - *"Why is this important for a leader?"*
 - *"How can students develop this skill?"*
- 3. Whole–Group Sharing:
 - Groups present their leadership skill and insights to the class.
 - Facilitator connects the discussion to public speaking:
 - *"Confidence, clarity, and standing up for others—these are the same skills we use in speaking up for change."*

4. Expression Exercise: "Speaking Up for Student Needs" (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *"Advocacy means speaking up for yourself and others. Let's practice how we can confidently ask for what students in temporary housing need."*

Activity Steps:

1. Scenario Setup:
 - Students are given a real-world scenario where they must advocate for a student need in a meeting with a school leader.
 - Sample scenarios:
 - *Asking a principal for more support for students in temporary housing.*
 - *Talking to a counselor about access to tutoring or college prep.*
 - *Requesting transportation assistance for students facing long commutes.*
2. Pair or Small Group Role–Play:
 - Students take turns acting out the conversation.
 - One student plays the school leader, the other plays the advocate.
3. Whole–Group Reflection:
 - After role–play, facilitator asks:
 - *"What was easy? What was difficult?"*
 - *"How did it feel speaking up?"*
 - *"What strategies made the strongest impact?"*
- Key Takeaway:
 - *"The more you practice using your voice, the stronger it gets. You already have the power to advocate for yourself and others."*



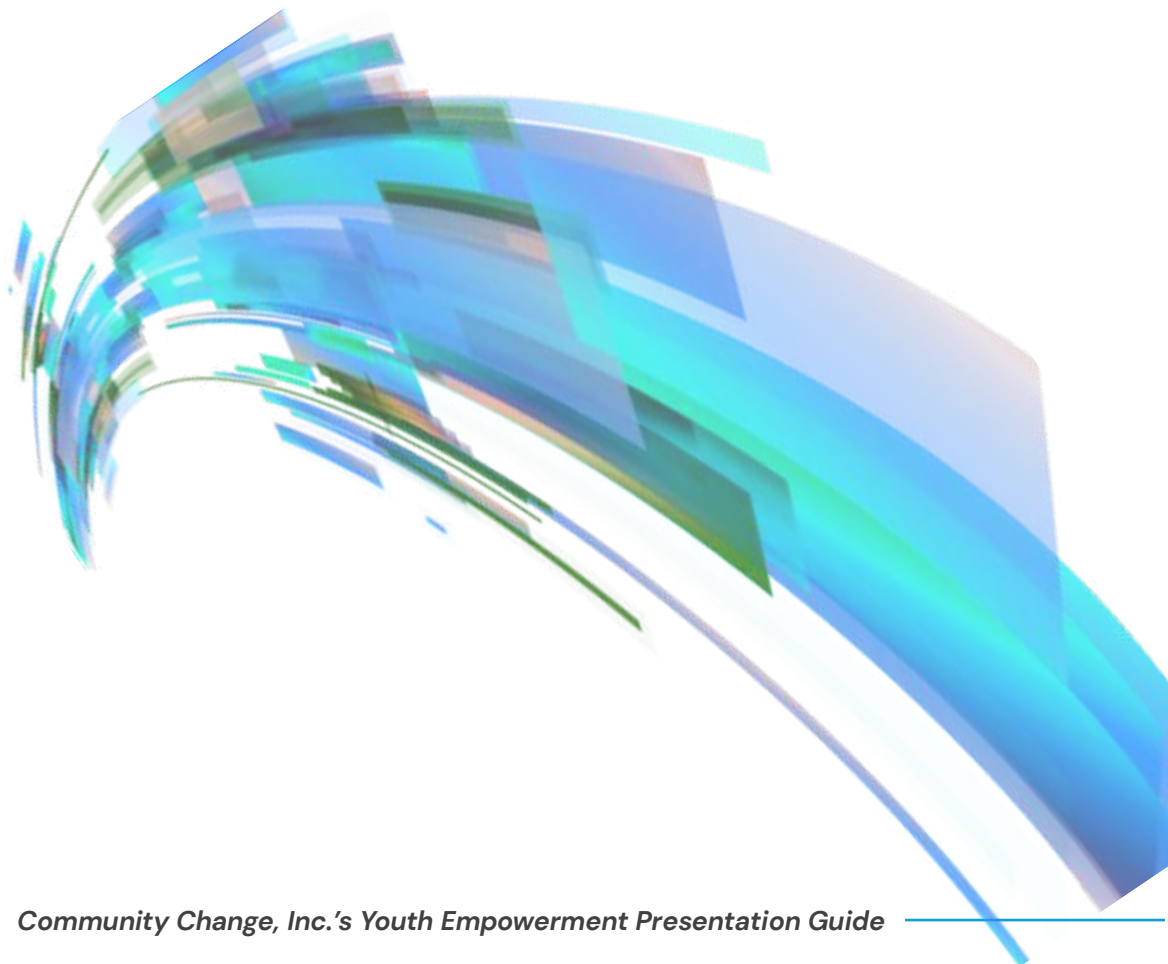
5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one leadership quality you want to work on?
 2. What is one thing that makes someone a strong speaker?
 3. What is one way you can practice using your voice?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"In our next lesson, we'll explore how our support systems—friends, family, and mentors—can help us on our leadership journey."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one small action they can take to strengthen their communication skills.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will speak up in class at least once this week."*
 - *"I will practice asking a teacher for something I need."*
 - *"I will start using strong, confident voice when I talk about my goals."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Your voice is powerful. Keep using it, and people will listen."*





| Lesson 4: "Identifying Our Support Systems"

Objective:

- Help students recognize the people and resources that support them in school and in their communities.
- Encourage students to map out their personal and community assets to understand the importance of support networks.
- Allow students to express gratitude by writing a letter of appreciation to someone who has positively impacted them.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"Strong leaders don't do it alone. Everyone needs support—friends, family, mentors, and community members who help them succeed. Today, we're going to explore who supports us and how we can strengthen those connections."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"Understanding our support systems will help us build stronger action plans to improve student success."*

2. Icebreaker: "Support Web" (2 min)

- Activity:
 - Students stand in a circle.
 - The facilitator holds a ball of string/yarn and starts by naming someone who has supported them (e.g., "My high school teacher always encouraged me").
 - They then toss the yarn to another student, who names their own supporter and tosses the yarn again.
 - The activity continues until everyone has spoken, creating a "web" of support.
- Debrief:
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"What do you notice about this web?"*
 - *"How does this relate to real-life support systems?"*
 - Key takeaway: *"We are all connected, and having a strong support system makes us stronger."*



3. Exploratory Exercise: "Mapping Our Support Systems" (20 min)

- Framing Question: *Who supports me, and how do they help me succeed?*

Activity Steps:

1. Brainstorming:
 - Facilitator writes two categories on the board:
 - Personal Support (People you know personally: family, friends, teachers, mentors)
 - Community Support (Programs and resources available: school counselors, community centers, afterschool programs, college prep services, social workers, etc.)
 - Students call out examples, and facilitator lists them on the board.
2. Creating Personal Support Maps:
 - Each student draws a "Support Map", placing themselves in the center.
 - They add the names of people and organizations that support them, with lines connecting to how each one helps.
 - Example:
 - Parent/Guardian → Encourages me in school
 - Teacher → Helps with homework
 - Mentor → Gives career advice
 - Community Center → Provides college resources
3. Small Group Sharing:
 - In groups of 3-4, students share their support maps and discuss:
 - *"What surprises you about your support system?"*
 - *"Where could you use more support?"*
4. Whole Group Reflection:
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"What patterns do we see in our support systems?"*
 - *"What happens when students don't have enough support?"*
 - *"How can schools and communities better support students like us?"*

4. Expression Exercise: "Writing a Letter of Appreciation" (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *"One of the most powerful things we can do is recognize those who support us. Today, we'll write a letter of appreciation to someone who has made a difference in our lives."*



Activity Steps:

1. Who Has Helped You?
 - Students reflect and choose one person from their support map to write a letter to.
 - This can be a teacher, mentor, friend, family member, school staff, or community leader.
2. Letter Structure (Guide on Board):
 - Greeting: *Dear [Name],*
 - Why You're Writing: *I wanted to take a moment to thank you for...*
 - What They Did: *One time you helped me was when...*
 - How It Impacted You: *Because of your support, I have been able to...*
 - Closing Statement: *Thank you for being part of my journey. I appreciate you!*
3. Students Write Their Letters
 - Encourage students to be specific and authentic.
 - If they are comfortable, they can share their letters in small groups.
4. Optional: Delivering the Letters
 - Students can choose to deliver their letters in person, by email, or anonymously through the facilitator.

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. Who is one person or resource that supports you?
 2. Why is it important to recognize who helps us succeed?
 3. How can you ask for support when you need it?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"Strong support systems help us build confidence and leadership. Next, we'll explore how to connect our personal strengths to our leadership skills."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one action they will take to strengthen their support system.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will reach out to a teacher for extra help in class."*
 - *"I will join a mentoring program in my school."*
 - *"I will thank a friend who always listens to me."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"No one succeeds alone. The stronger our support systems, the stronger we become."*



| Lesson 5: "Connecting Personal Identity to Leadership"

Objective:

- Help students recognize how their personal experiences shape their leadership style.
- Explore real-world examples of student leaders who have experienced temporary housing or homelessness.
- Encourage students to set a leadership goal for their growth and impact.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"Leadership isn't just about having a title—it's about using your experiences to help others. Many great leaders have faced obstacles, including homelessness and housing insecurity, yet they still created change. Today, we'll explore how we can do the same."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"We are building toward an action plan that will improve school outcomes for students like us. Understanding our leadership potential is key to making change happen."*

2. Icebreaker: "If I Were a Leader, I Would..." (2 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student completes the sentence:
 - *"If I were a leader, I would..."*
 - Students share their responses aloud (or write them down if they prefer).
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"What patterns do we notice?"*
 - *"What do these responses tell us about leadership?"*
 - Key takeaway: *"Everyone has their own vision of leadership. There's no single 'right way' to lead."*

3. Exploratory Exercise: "What Does Leadership Look Like?" (20 min)

- Framing Question: *What makes a great leader, and how do young people lead change—especially those who have experienced homelessness or housing instability?*

Activity Steps:

1. Brainstorm Leadership Qualities
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"What are the qualities of a strong leader?"*



- *"Who are some leaders that inspire you?"*
 - Write student responses on a whiteboard or chart paper.
 - Expected answers: *"Confident, good listener, problem solver, stands up for others, communicates well."*
2. Case Study on Student Leaders Who Experienced Homelessness
- Facilitator presents a brief case study on student leaders who have faced temporary housing challenges:
 - Tyrone Poole – Grew up homeless but later founded a nonprofit that helps people experiencing homelessness find stability.
 - Dasia Edmond – A student who lived in shelters and now advocates for better housing policies for youth.
 - Liz Murray ("Homeless to Harvard") – A student who lived on the streets in NYC before earning a scholarship to Harvard.
 - James O'Connell – A high school student who started a youth-led housing advocacy group after experiencing housing insecurity.
 - Discussion Questions:
 - *"What challenges did they face?"*
 - *"What leadership qualities did they use?"*
 - *"How did their personal experiences influence their leadership?"*
3. Small Group Reflection:
- In groups of 3-4, students discuss:
 - *"How can students like us be leaders in our schools and communities?"*
 - *"What leadership qualities do we already have?"*

4. Expression Exercise: "Setting a Leadership Goal" (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *"Leadership starts with a goal. What kind of leader do you want to be?"*

Activity Steps:

1. Students Reflect on Their Leadership Strengths
 - Ask: *"What leadership skills do you already have?"*
 - Students write down at least one leadership quality they feel strong in.
2. Writing a Leadership Goal
 - Students complete the prompt:
 - *"One way I can be a leader in my school/community is by..."*
 - *"A leadership skill I want to develop is..."*
 - Encourage students to think about real actions they can take (e.g., speaking up in class, helping a peer, starting a club).
3. Pair & Share (Optional)



- Students share their leadership goal with a partner.
- Facilitator asks for volunteers to share with the whole group.

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one thing you learned about leadership today?
 2. What is one leadership quality you want to grow?
 3. What is one way you can be a leader in your school or community?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:
"Every leader starts somewhere. As we continue, you'll have chances to build and practice these skills."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one small action they will take to develop their leadership skills.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will speak up in class at least once this week."*
 - *"I will encourage a friend to stay motivated in school."*
 - *"I will reach out to a teacher or mentor for advice on leadership."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Leaders aren't born—they're built. Every small action you take helps you become the leader you want to be."*



| Lesson 6: “Voices in the Mirror”

Objective:

Help students deepen their self-awareness and confidence by exploring how they see themselves vs. how others see them.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator’s Message:

“Our identity is made up of how we see ourselves—and how others see us. Today, we’ll reflect on both, and think about the power of owning our story.”

2. Icebreaker: “Mirror, Mirror” (2 min)

Each student pairs up and shares one thing they admire about their partner. Then they switch.

Facilitator prompts: “How did it feel hearing how someone else sees you?”

3. Exploratory Exercise: “How Do I See Myself?” (20 min)

Students complete a 3-column chart:

- Column 1: Words I use to describe myself
 - Column 2: Words others have used to describe me
 - Column 3: Words I want to be known for
- Discuss in small groups. Share themes.

4. Expression Exercise: “I Am...” Statements (20 min)

Students write a creative poem or mantra starting with “I am...” to affirm their identity and power.

Example:

“I am more than a student. I am a fighter, a thinker, a dreamer...”

5. Review (5 min)

What did you discover about yourself today?

Did anything surprise you?

6. Reflection (5 min)

One action I’ll take to affirm who I am this week is...

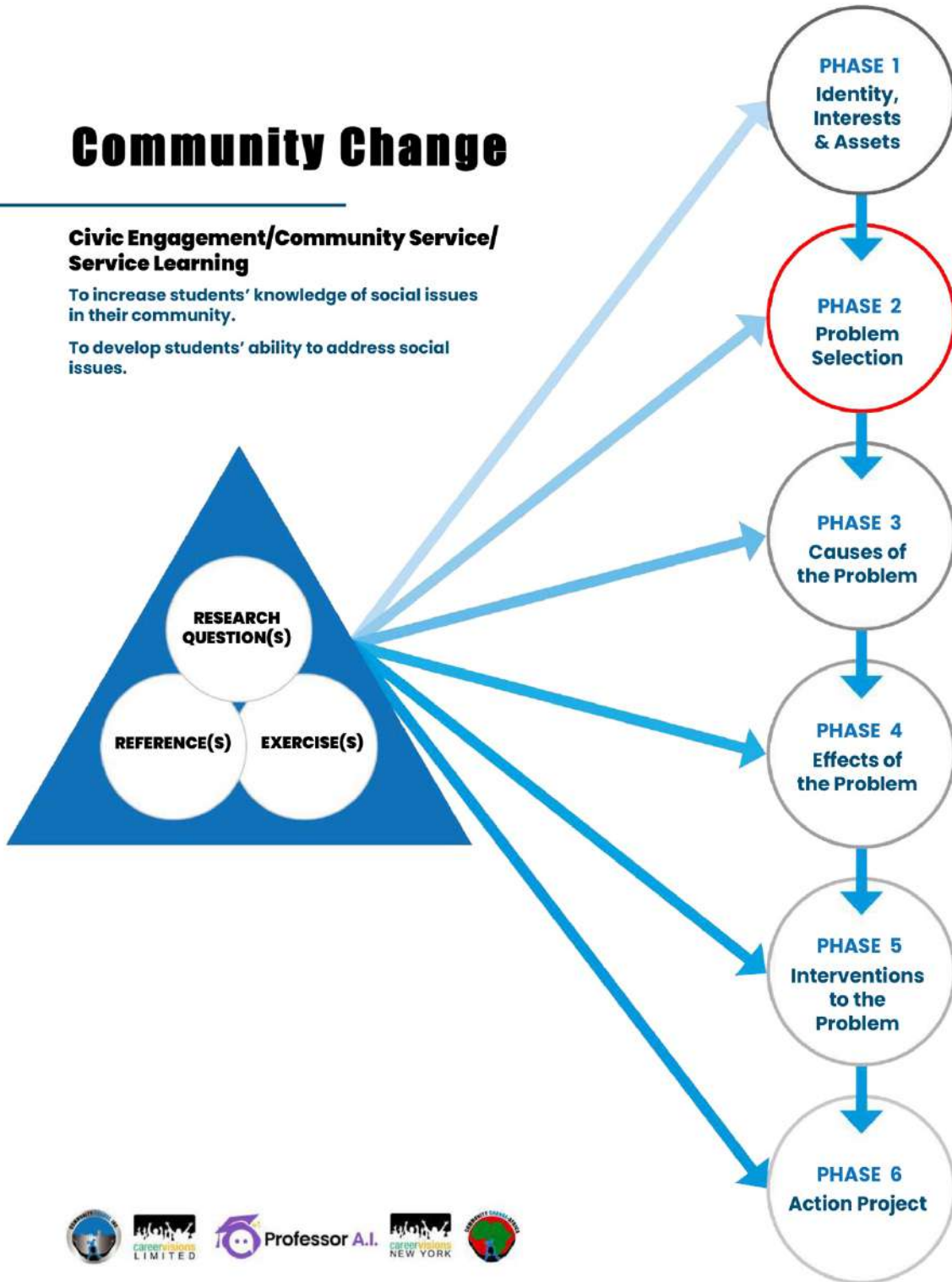
Phase 2: Problem Identification

Community Change

Civic Engagement/Community Service/ Service Learning

To increase students' knowledge of social issues in their community.

To develop students' ability to address social issues.





| Lesson 7: Identifying Key Challenges to Youth Empowerment in Our Schools

Objective:

- Define youth empowerment and explore how it applies to students in temporary housing.
- Identify and analyze key barriers to youth empowerment and education.
- Facilitate collaborative discussion and voting to prioritize the top challenges that will guide future lessons.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"So far, we've explored who we are, our strengths, and our leadership potential. Now, we're going to take a step further—what are the biggest challenges stopping students in temporary housing from thriving in school?"*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"By identifying these barriers, we can begin working on real solutions that will be presented to Deputy Chancellor Cristina Meléndez."*

2. Definition & Discussion: What is Youth Empowerment? (5 min)

- Definition:
 - *Youth empowerment means giving young people the knowledge, confidence, and opportunities to make decisions, take action, and create change in their schools and communities.*
- Key Aspects of Youth Empowerment:
 - Voice & Representation – Having a say in school decisions.
 - Access to Resources – Getting the support needed to succeed.
 - Leadership Opportunities – Being able to lead and make change.
 - Advocacy & Action – Using personal experiences to push for improvements.
- Facilitator asks:
 - *"What does empowerment look like in school? Have you ever felt empowered?"*
 - *"What would a truly empowering school environment look like?"*



3. Icebreaker: "Barriers & Bridges" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Students call out one word that represents a challenge they face in school.
 - Then, students call out one word that represents something that has helped them in school (a teacher, a program, a mindset, etc.).
 - Facilitator writes responses on a whiteboard or chart paper, splitting them into two lists: Barriers vs. Bridges (Supports).
 - Key takeaway: *"Challenges exist, but so do opportunities to overcome them. Today, we'll focus on the biggest barriers so we can start working toward solutions."*

4. Exploratory Exercise: "What Are the Biggest Barriers?" (20 min)

- Framing Question: *What prevents students in temporary housing from succeeding in school and feeling empowered?*

Activity Steps:

1. Brainstorming (Individual Reflection)
 - Students take two minutes to individually write down as many challenges as they can think of.
 - Prompt: *"What makes school harder for students in temporary housing?"*
2. Small Group Discussion (3–4 students per group)
 - Students share their ideas and categorize challenges into themes.
 - Common themes might include:
 - School Instability – Transferring schools frequently, losing credits, repeating coursework.
 - Lack of Support – No designated staff to help students in temporary housing, little college/career guidance.
 - Transportation Barriers – Long commutes to school, difficulty getting MetroCards.
 - Stigma & Isolation – Feeling embarrassed about their housing situation, not wanting to ask for help.
 - Basic Needs & Mental Health – Hunger, lack of sleep, stress, anxiety, and difficulty focusing in class.
3. Whole Group Sharing & Theming
 - Groups present their top 2–3 challenges to the class.
 - Facilitator writes these on the board and organizes them into categories.
 - Key takeaway: *"Many of us share the same challenges. Let's decide which ones we should focus on in our action plan."*



5. Expression Exercise: "Voting on the Top Challenges" (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *"We can't solve everything at once, but we can focus on the most urgent challenges that impact students the most."*

Activity Steps:

1. Narrowing Down the List
 - Facilitator reviews all the challenges from the board.
 - Students help group similar challenges together (e.g., school instability & lack of credit transfers go together).
2. Silent Voting Activity
 - Each student gets three votes (they can distribute them however they like—e.g., all three votes to one issue or one vote each to three different issues).
 - They place sticky notes or tally marks next to the issues they feel are most important.
3. Finalizing the Top Challenges
 - Facilitator counts the votes and identifies the top three to five issues.
 - If needed, a brief discussion can help finalize the ranking.
 - Key takeaway: *"These are the challenges we'll work on solving together. We'll use our voices to push for real change."*

6. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one challenge that stood out to you today?
 2. How did it feel to see that others face similar struggles?
 3. Why is it important to prioritize the challenges we want to solve?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:
"Now that we know the biggest barriers, we can start exploring why they exist and what we can do about them."

7. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one small action they can take to address one of the challenges identified.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will talk to my school counselor about how students in temporary housing get support."*
 - *"I will research programs that help students like me get MetroCards or transportation assistance."*
 - *"I will share my experience with a teacher I trust to raise awareness."*



| Lesson 8: How Systemic Barriers Impact Us

Objective:

- Help students understand how policies and systems impact their education and empowerment.
- Use real-life case studies to analyze how laws, policies, and school practices shape student experiences.
- Guide students in writing a student letter to the NYC Department of Education (DOE) advocating for change.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"We've identified the biggest challenges students in temporary housing face. Today, we'll dig deeper—why do these problems exist, and what policies or systems keep them in place?"*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"By understanding the policies behind these barriers, we can push for real change and solutions in our Youth Empowerment Action Plan."*

2. Icebreaker: "What is a Policy?" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"What comes to mind when you hear the word 'policy'?"*
 - *"Can you think of a rule in your school that helps or hurts students?"*
 - Write student responses on the board/chart paper and introduce the definition:
- Definition:
 - *A policy is a rule or guideline created by schools, the government, or organizations that affects how people live, work, or learn.*
 - Example: NYC's MetroCard program for students is a policy designed to help students travel to school.
- Discussion:
 - *"Why do policies matter for students in temporary housing?"*

3. Exploratory Exercise: Case Study – How Policy Affects Student Experiences (20 min)

- Framing Question: *How do school and government policies impact students in temporary housing?*



Activity Steps:

1. Choose a Real-Life Case Study (Facilitator Presents One or More):
 - NYC School Instability Policy & Credit Transfers
 - Many students in temporary housing transfer schools frequently. NYC schools have policies about credit transfer, but many students still lose credits when moving.
 - Impact: Students have to repeat courses, delaying graduation.
 - NYC Free MetroCard Policy for Students
 - NYC provides MetroCards to students, but policies prevent some students in temporary housing from getting them if they live in shelters outside their school zone.
 - Impact: Some students miss school or travel long distances, affecting grades and attendance.
 - The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
 - A federal law that protects students experiencing homelessness, ensuring they can stay in their original school even if they move to a different shelter.
 - Impact: Not all schools fully enforce this, causing unnecessary school transfers.
2. Small Group Discussion:
 - Break into small groups (3-4 students).
 - Assign each group one case study and have them answer:
 - *"How does this policy impact students?"*
 - *"Is this policy helping or hurting students? Why?"*
 - *"What could be changed to improve this policy?"*
3. Whole Group Sharing:
 - Each group presents their findings.
 - Facilitator summarizes key takeaways: *"Policies shape student experiences. If we want change, we need to speak up."*
4. Expression Exercise: **"Writing a Student Letter to the DOE" (20 min)**
 - Framing Statement: *"Policies don't change unless people demand change. Today, you'll write a letter to the NYC Department of Education (DOE) about a key barrier affecting students in temporary housing."*



Activity Steps:

1. Choosing a Topic:
 - Students pick one key challenge they care about (e.g., MetroCard access, school transfers, lack of support services).
 - They brainstorm why it's important and what should change.
2. Writing the Letter:
 - Facilitator provides a letter template:

Dear NYC Department of Education,

My name is [Student Name], and I am a high school student in New York City. I am writing to you because [state the issue, e.g., "students in temporary housing struggle with transportation because MetroCards are not always available to us"].

This issue affects students like me because [explain the impact, e.g., "Long commutes cause students to miss school, be late, or struggle with exhaustion."].

I believe that [suggest a change, e.g., "The DOE should allow all students in temporary housing to receive free MetroCards, no matter where they live."].

Thank you for listening to students like me. I hope you will consider making this change to support students in temporary housing.

Sincerely,
[Student Name]

3. Sharing & Discussion:
 - Students volunteer to read their letters aloud.
 - Facilitator encourages discussion:
 - *"How did it feel to write this letter?"*
 - *"What impact could these letters have if they were sent?"*
4. (Optional: Sending the Letters)
 - Facilitator collects the letters and discusses the option of sending them to DOE representatives.



5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one policy that affects students in temporary housing?
 2. How do rules and laws shape student success?
 3. What is one way students can use their voices to push for change?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"Policies shape our lives, but students have the power to influence them. Next, we'll start exploring what solutions we can create to improve these systems."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one action they can take to raise awareness about a policy issue.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will talk to a teacher about how students in temporary housing are supported."*
 - *"I will research more about the McKinney-Vento Act and my rights."*
 - *"I will share what I learned today with a friend who is also struggling with school transfers."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Every change starts with a voice. Your voice matters in making schools better for students in temporary housing."*





| Lesson 9: Prioritizing the Biggest Issues Related to Youth Empowerment

Objective:

- Help students evaluate and prioritize the most urgent challenges related to youth empowerment in education.
- Develop students' debate, reasoning, and persuasive communication skills.
- Prepare students to articulate their concerns clearly to policymakers and school leaders.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"We've identified many challenges that students in temporary housing face. Now, we need to decide which ones we will focus on solving. Today, you'll work together to debate and defend the most urgent issue that needs action."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"By prioritizing our top issues, we can develop strong recommendations for our Youth Empowerment Action Plan and present them to Deputy Chancellor Cristina Meléndez."*

2. Icebreaker: "Rapid Ranking" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Facilitator writes the top challenges identified in the previous lesson on the board.
 - Students rank the three most urgent issues individually (silent reflection).
 - Facilitator asks a few students to share their rankings and explain their reasoning.
 - Key takeaway: *"Different people have different priorities. Let's see how we can come to a group decision."*

3. Exploratory Exercise: Small Group Debate – "Which Problem Needs Urgent Action?" (20 min)

- Framing Question: *Which issue should we prioritize first? Why?*

Activity Steps:

1. Divide into Small Groups (4–5 students per group).
 - Each group chooses one challenge they believe is the most urgent (e.g., school instability, lack of MetroCards, lack of mental health support, credit transfer issues).



- They will build a case for why their issue should be the top priority.
- 2. Group Discussion & Preparation:
 - Each group answers:
 - *"Why is this issue important?"*
 - *"Who does it affect the most?"*
 - *"What happens if we don't fix it?"*
 - Groups develop three strong arguments for why their issue needs urgent action.
- 3. Debate Format:
 - Groups take turns presenting their case for their chosen issue.
 - Other groups can ask one question to challenge or clarify their reasoning.
- 4. Whole-Group Reflection:
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"Which argument stood out the most?"*
 - *"Did anyone's opinion change after hearing other groups?"*
 - *"What did this debate teach us about prioritizing issues?"*

4. Expression Exercise: Pitch a Challenge and Why It Matters (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *"Now, imagine you have two minutes to convince a school leader to focus on your issue. How would you do it?"*

Activity Steps:

1. Writing a Pitch
 - Students individually write a short speech (2-3 sentences) explaining why their chosen issue is urgent.
 - Example Structure:
 - The Issue: *"One of the biggest problems for students in temporary housing is..."*
 - Why It Matters: *"This affects students because..."*
 - Call to Action: *"We need to change this by..."*
2. Delivering the Pitch
 - Students volunteer to present their short pitch to the class.
 - Facilitator provides positive feedback on clarity, confidence, and impact.
3. Group Vote on the Final Priorities
 - After hearing pitches, the class votes on the top 3-5 issues to focus on in the Youth Empowerment Action Plan.

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one issue that stood out to you today?
 2. How did debating and pitching help you think differently about these issues?
 3. Why is it important to focus on a few key issues rather than too many?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"Now that we've selected our top priorities, we can start thinking about real solutions. Next, we'll research policies and programs that could help solve these problems."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one way they will continue advocating for the issue they discussed.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will research how other students have solved this problem in other cities."*
 - *"I will talk to a teacher about this issue and ask what they think."*
 - *"I will work on making my pitch stronger so I can present it in a future meeting."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Prioritizing issues is the first step toward solving them. Now that we know what matters most, let's start working on solutions."*





| Lesson 10: Finalizing Our Focus Areas

Objective:

- Help students finalize the top 3–5 focus areas that will guide their Youth Empowerment Action Plan.
- Encourage students to visualize and articulate the change they want to see in their schools and communities.
- Transition from identifying problems to developing action-oriented solutions.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"We've spent time identifying key challenges and debating which ones need the most urgent action. Now, we'll finalize the 3–5 focus areas that will shape our action plan."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"By the end of today, we will have clear focus areas that will guide the solutions we will present to Deputy Chancellor Cristina Meléndez."*

2. Icebreaker: "The Change I Want to See" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Students complete the sentence:
 - *"If I could change one thing about my school or community to better support students in temporary housing, it would be..."*
 - Students share their responses aloud (or write them down if they prefer).
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"What patterns do we notice?"*
 - *"Which issues seem to come up the most?"*
 - Key takeaway: *"These ideas will help us finalize the major focus areas for our action plan."*

3. Identifying the 3–5 Major Focus Areas (20 min)

- Framing Question: *What are the biggest issues that we need to focus on solving?*

Activity Steps:

1. Review the Key Challenges from Previous Lessons
 - Facilitator writes on the board the top challenges debated in Lesson 8.
 - Examples may include:
 - School instability (frequent transfers, credit loss).



- Lack of transportation support (MetroCards, bus access).
 - Lack of mental health and emotional support.
 - Food insecurity and basic needs (access to meals, clothing, hygiene).
 - Limited career and college prep for students in temporary housing.
2. Small Group Discussion (3–4 students per group)
 - Each group selects their top 3–5 issues from the list.
 - Groups discuss:
 - *“Why is this issue critical?”*
 - *“What would improving this issue look like?”*
 - *“Who is affected most by this?”*
 3. Whole Group Discussion & Final Vote
 - Groups present their chosen focus areas and their reasoning.
 - Facilitator leads a class vote to finalize the 3–5 focus areas.
 - Key takeaway: *“Now that we have our priorities, we can start focusing on real solutions.”*

4. Expression Exercise: Vision Statements for Each Focus Area (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *“Now that we’ve chosen our focus areas, let’s define what success would look like.”*

Activity Steps:

1. Writing a Vision Statement for Each Focus Area
 - Break students into small groups (1 group per focus area).
 - Each group completes the following prompt:
 - *“In the future, a school that fully supports students in temporary housing would...”*
 - Example:
 - Before: *“Right now, many students in temporary housing don’t get MetroCards, making it hard to get to school.”*
 - Vision Statement: *“Every student in temporary housing will receive reliable transportation support to ensure they get to school on time.”*
2. Sharing & Refining the Statements
 - Each group presents their vision statement to the class.
 - Facilitator helps refine the statements so they are clear and action-driven.

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one focus area you are most passionate about?
 2. How does having clear focus areas help us build a strong action plan?
 3. What do you think will be the hardest part of solving these issues?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"Now that we have our focus areas, we will start brainstorming and researching real solutions for each issue."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one action they will take to support the focus areas.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will research how other schools have solved similar problems."*
 - *"I will talk to a teacher about ways to improve mental health support."*
 - *"I will start drafting ideas for our action plan."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Change starts with a clear vision. Now that we know what we're working toward, let's start designing solutions."*





| Lesson 11: "If I Were Principal For a Day"

Objective:

Students brainstorm school-wide changes that could empower youth in temporary housing.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"Today, we imagine what we'd change if we had the power to lead our school."

2. Icebreaker: "One Rule I'd Change" (5 min)

Each student shares one school rule or policy they would change and why.

3. Exploratory Exercise: "My Principal Plan" (20 min)

Students draft a 3-point plan as if they were principal:

- One change to make school more empowering
 - One new support for students in temporary housing
 - One leadership opportunity for students
- Share in small groups, then debrief.

4. Expression Exercise: "Design Your Dream School" (20 min)

Students draw or describe their ideal school. Include:

- Resources
- Leadership structures
- Student roles

5. Review (5 min)

What change would make the biggest difference in your school?

6. Reflection (5 min)

One way I can advocate for change in my school is...

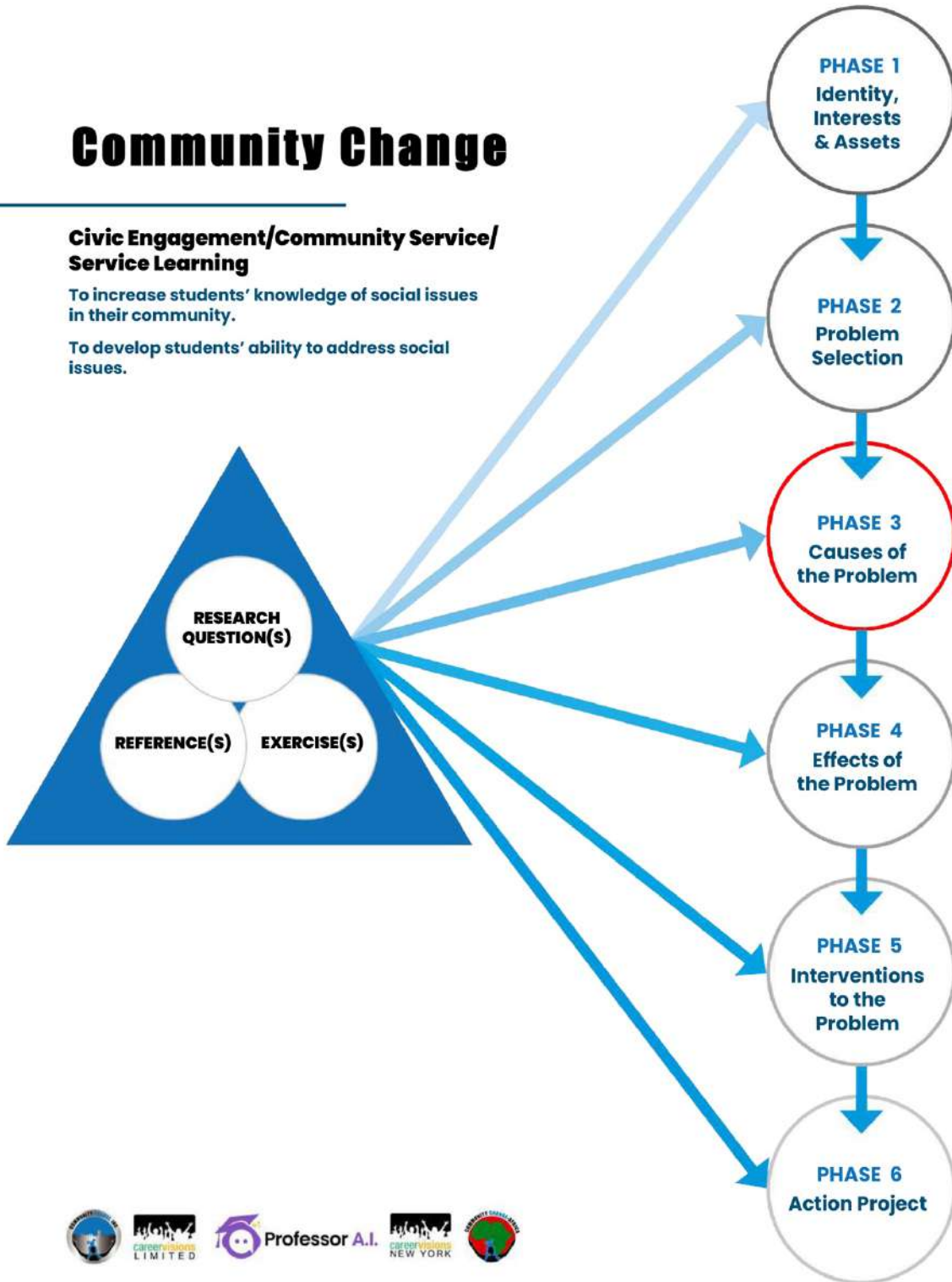
Phase 3: Causes of the Issue

Community Change

Civic Engagement/Community Service/ Service Learning

To increase students' knowledge of social issues in their community.

To develop students' ability to address social issues.





| Lesson 12: Understanding Root Causes

Objective:

- Help students analyze the root causes of the challenges they have identified in their Youth Empowerment Action Plan.
- Develop students' critical thinking skills by exploring the systemic and social factors that contribute to these issues.
- Introduce students to cause-and-effect mapping as a way to visualize problems and solutions.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"Last time, we finalized our focus areas. Today, we'll dig deeper—why do these challenges exist in the first place? Understanding root causes helps us come up with real solutions."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"By understanding the causes of these issues, we can develop strong solutions in our Youth Empowerment Action Plan."*

2. Icebreaker: "Why Does This Happen?" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Facilitator presents a simple everyday issue and asks students to trace its causes.
 - Example: *"Imagine a student is late to school every day. Why might this be happening?"*
 - Students suggest possible reasons (e.g., long commute, unreliable public transportation, oversleeping due to lack of stable housing).
 - Key takeaway: *"Problems usually have deeper causes. Let's apply this thinking to the issues we identified last time."*

3. Discussion: Why Do These Challenges Exist? (20 min)

- Framing Question: *What are the deeper reasons behind the issues we identified?*

Activity Steps:

1. Review the 3–5 Focus Areas from Lesson 9
 - Facilitator writes each focus area on the board. Examples may include:
 - School Instability – Frequent school transfers and credit loss.
 - Transportation Barriers – Lack of MetroCards or school bus access.



- Mental Health & Emotional Support – No counselors or trauma-informed services.
 - Food & Basic Needs – Lack of access to meals, clothing, and hygiene products.
 - College & Career Readiness – Lack of guidance for students in temporary housing.
2. Whole-Class Discussion:
 - Facilitator asks students:
 - *“What do you think is causing each of these problems?”*
 - *“Who is responsible for addressing these issues?”*
 - *“Are these problems new, or have they been around for a long time?”*
 3. Small Group Discussions:
 - Students break into small groups (3-4 per group).
 - Each group is assigned one focus area and brainstorms answers to:
 - *“What are the biggest reasons this problem exists?”*
 - *“How does this issue impact students?”*
 - Groups record their answers on chart paper or whiteboards.

4. Expression Exercise: Cause-and-Effect Maps (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *“Problems don’t exist in isolation—one issue can lead to many effects. Let’s map out the causes and impacts of our focus areas.”*

Activity Steps:

1. Introduce Cause-and-Effect Mapping
 - Facilitator explains:
 - A cause-and-effect map helps us see how different problems are connected.
 - We start with a problem in the middle and work outward, identifying its causes and consequences.
2. Students Create Their Own Cause-and-Effect Maps
 - Each group chooses one focus area and draws a cause-and-effect map:
 - In the center → Write the problem (e.g., *Students in temporary housing struggle with transportation*).
 - On the left side → List causes (e.g., *MetroCard restrictions, lack of bus routes, shelters far from schools*).
 - On the right side → List effects (e.g., *Students are late, miss school, feel frustrated, drop in grades*).
3. Whole-Class Sharing:
 - Groups present their cause-and-effect maps.



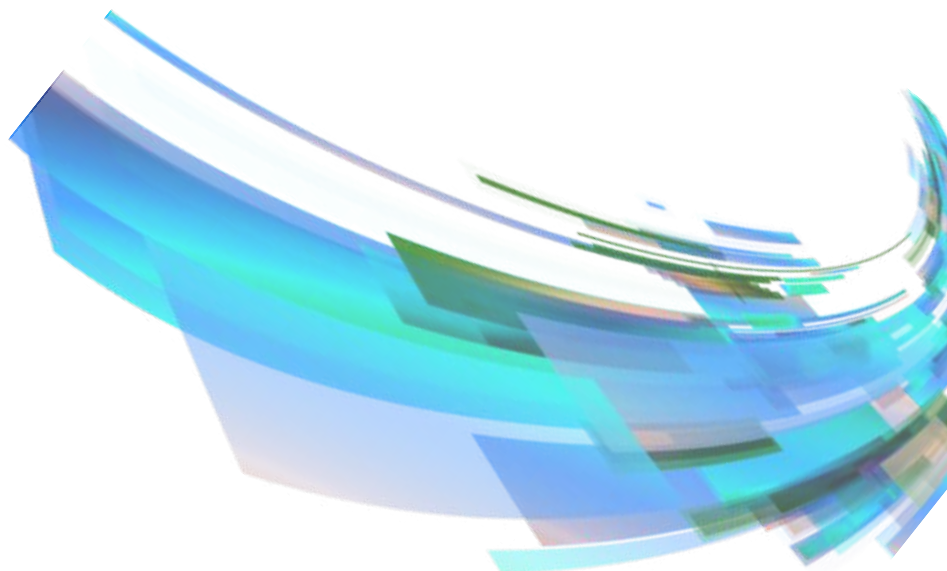
- Facilitator helps connect themes between different maps.
- Key takeaway: *"When we understand the root causes, we can start thinking about solutions."*

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one cause of a major issue that surprised you today?
 2. How do multiple problems connect to each other?
 3. Why is it important to understand root causes before coming up with solutions?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:
"Now that we understand the causes of these issues, we can begin working on real solutions to address them."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one way they can use what they learned today to push for change.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will ask my school counselor what services are available for students in temporary housing."*
 - *"I will research how other schools have solved similar issues."*
 - *"I will think more about the connection between school instability and mental health."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Every issue has a cause, but every problem also has a solution. In our next lesson, we'll start coming up with ways to fix these problems."*





| Lesson 13: Researching Data & Lived Experiences

Objective:

- Explore statistical data on students in temporary housing to understand broader trends.
- Conduct a mini-research project using real-world data and personal narratives.
- Develop critical thinking skills by analyzing and presenting findings.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"Numbers tell a story, but so do personal experiences. Today, we'll explore both—looking at statistics on students in temporary housing and conducting our own mini-research to better understand these issues."

Reinforce the End Goal:

"By analyzing data and personal stories, we can gain a fuller picture of the challenges students face, which will inform our action plans for change."

2. Icebreaker: "What's in a Number?" (5 min)

Activity:

- The facilitator writes a few key statistics on the board without context (e.g., "1 in 10," "85%," "50%").
- Students guess what each number represents in relation to students in temporary housing.
- The facilitator reveals the real statistics and explains their significance.

Discussion Questions:

- Were any of these numbers surprising? Why or why not?
- How does data shape our understanding of a problem?

Key Takeaway:

"Data helps us see patterns, but numbers alone don't tell the full story. We need to look at real student experiences alongside the statistics."

3. Exploratory Exercise: "Analyzing the Data" (20 min)

Framing Question:

What do statistics say about students in temporary housing, and what do they miss?



Activity Steps:

1. Reviewing Key Statistics (10 min)

- The facilitator provides a short handout or slide with real statistics, such as:
 - Percentage of students in NYC public schools experiencing temporary housing.
 - Graduation and dropout rates for students in temporary housing compared to housed students.
 - Percentage of students lacking access to school transportation, stable internet, or other resources.
- Students review the statistics in pairs and write down key takeaways.

2. Small Group Discussion (10 min)

- Groups of 3–4 discuss:
 - What trends do we notice?
 - How do these numbers compare to our personal experiences or what we've seen?
 - What questions do these statistics raise for us?

Whole Group Reflection:

- The facilitator records key insights on the board.
- Connecting the dots: "What do we still need to learn to fully understand these issues?"

4. Expression Exercise: Mini-Research Project (20 min)

Framing Statement:

"We've explored data—now, let's add real voices to the story by conducting our own mini-research."

Activity Steps:

1. Choosing a Research Focus (5 min)

Students select one of the following research topics:

- Transportation challenges for students in temporary housing.
- Impact of school instability on learning.
- Barriers to accessing school resources (meals, internet, etc.).
- Mental health challenges for students facing housing instability.

2. Gathering Evidence (10 min)

Each student conducts a quick research exercise, using one of the following methods:

- Personal Interviews: Interview a peer or reflect on personal experiences related to the chosen topic.
- Observations: Note something they've observed in their school or community.



- Online/Print Sources: Review a short article or infographic provided by the facilitator.

3. Writing a Summary (5 min)

Students write a short paragraph connecting data with lived experiences:

- What did the statistics show?
- What did real experiences add to the story?
- What questions remain?

Sharing (Optional): Volunteers read their findings aloud.

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

Facilitator prompts:

- What is one thing you learned from today's data?
- What is one way lived experiences added to our understanding?
- What is one question you still have?

Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"We now have a more complete picture of the challenges students in temporary housing face. In future lessons, we'll use what we've learned to develop real solutions."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

Activity:

Each student writes down or shares one small action they will take to continue their research.

Examples:

- "I will talk to a teacher about what resources are available for students in temporary housing."
- "I will look up more information on how school policies impact students like us."
- "I will ask a peer about their experiences moving schools."

Closing Message:

"Understanding the problem is the first step to solving it. Your voices and research matter in making change happen."



| Lesson 14: "Tracing It Back"

Objective:

Help students understand generational or systemic patterns behind current issues.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"Today we explore how history and systems have shaped the challenges we face."

2. Icebreaker: "What's One Rule That Never Made Sense?" (5 min)

Students share a confusing or unfair rule and how it made them feel.

3. Exploratory Exercise: "System Web" (20 min)

Students pick one issue (e.g. lack of mental health support). In groups, they map:

- School-level causes
- Community causes
- Government/policy causes

Draw lines showing how they connect.

4. Expression Exercise: "This is Bigger Than Me" (20 min)

Write a journal entry starting with:

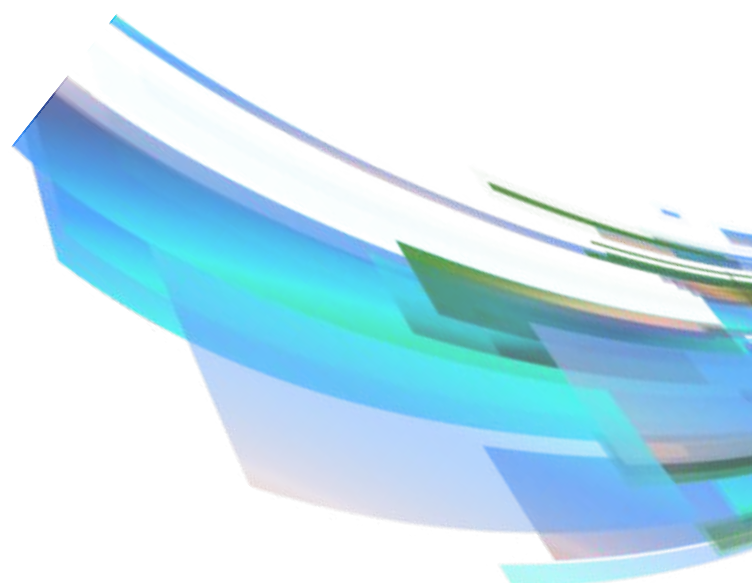
"I used to think this was just about me, but now I see..."

5. Review (5 min)

What's one system or pattern you didn't realize contributed to the problem?

6. Reflection (5 min)

One system I want to learn more about is...



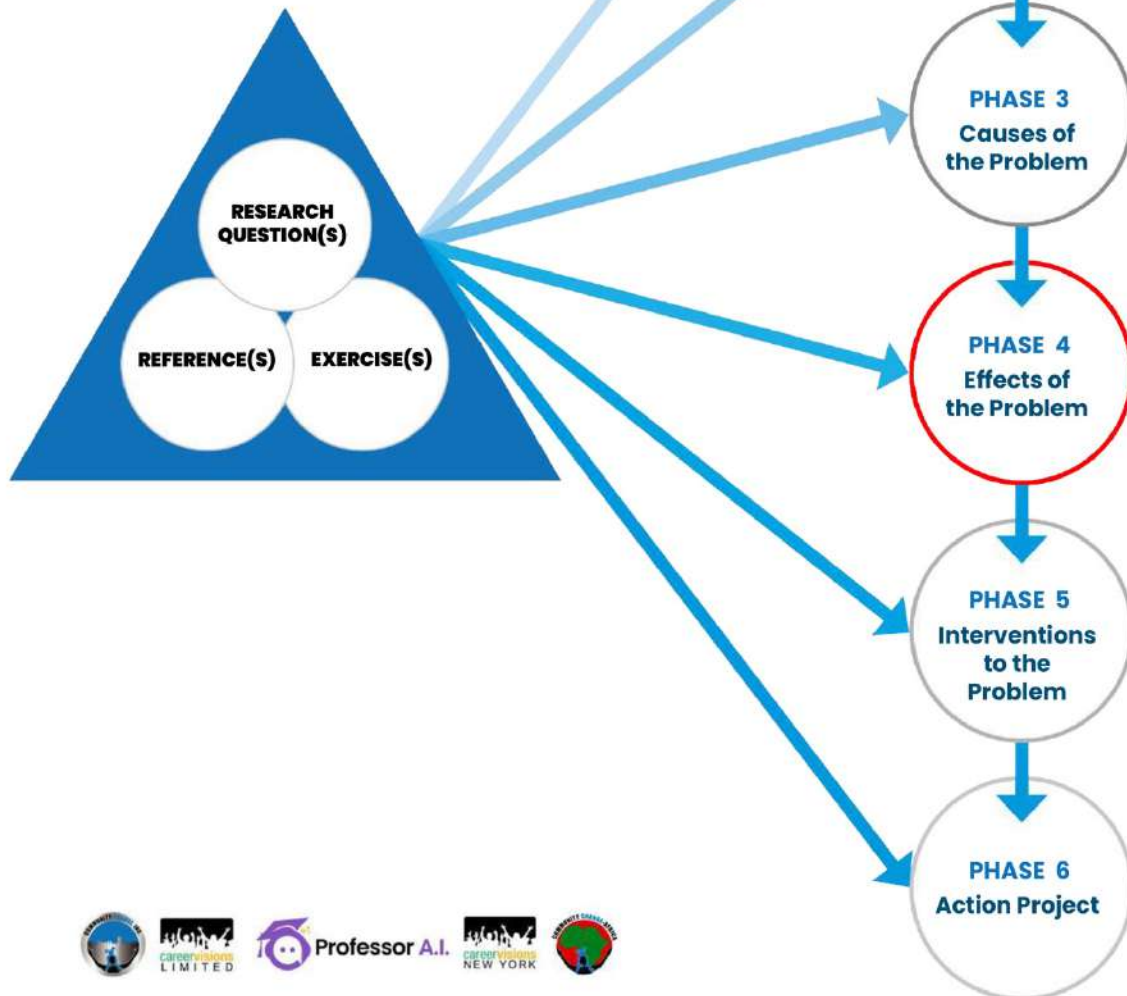
Phase 4: Effects of the Issue

Community Change

Civic Engagement/Community Service/ Service Learning

To increase students' knowledge of social issues
in their community.

To develop students' ability to address social
issues.





| Lesson 15: Researching Data & Lived Experiences (Part 2)

Objective:

- Help students understand the real-world impact of temporary housing on education by exploring data and personal stories.
- Teach students how to use research to support their advocacy efforts.
- Engage students in a mini-research project to gather evidence for their Youth Empowerment Action Plan.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"Last time, we explored the causes and effects of key issues. Today, we're diving into real data and lived experiences—how do statistics and personal stories shape our understanding of the issues?"*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"We are collecting evidence to support the recommendations we will present in our Youth Empowerment Action Plan."*

2. Icebreaker: "Data Walk" (10 min)

- Activity:
 - Facilitator posts key statistics about students in temporary housing around the room on large chart paper or printed handouts.
 - Students walk around the room in pairs, reading each statistic and writing down:
 - *One fact that surprises them*
 - *One question they have about the data*
 - After 5–7 minutes, students return to their seats, and the facilitator leads a brief discussion:
 - *"What did you find most shocking?"*
 - *"What patterns do you notice in the data?"*
 - *"Why do these numbers matter for making change?"*

3. Exploring Data on Students in Temporary Housing (10 min)

- Facilitator presents key statistics, such as:
 - Number of students in temporary housing in NYC: *Over 100,000 NYC public school students experience homelessness each year.*
 - Impact of school instability: *Students who move schools frequently are twice as likely to fall behind in reading and math.*
 - Barriers to success: *Only 57% of NYC students in temporary housing graduate high school on time, compared to 81% of their housed peers.*



- Discussion:
 - *"How does this data compare to our personal experiences?"*
 - *"Why do you think there's a gap between students in housing and those in temporary housing?"*
 - *"How can we use this data to push for change?"*

4. Mini-Research Project: Gathering More Evidence (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *"To create a strong action plan, we need to back up our recommendations with evidence. Let's gather more data and personal stories to support our ideas."*

Activity Steps:

1. Students Choose a Focus Area
 - Each student picks one of the 3-5 focus areas from previous lessons (e.g., school instability, transportation, mental health).
2. Conduct Mini-Research
 - Students use printed research handouts provided by the facilitator OR
 - Use provided websites/articles (if internet access is available).
3. Research Questions to Answer:
 - *What statistics support the urgency of this issue?*
 - *Are there existing policies or programs that address this issue?*
 - *What real-life student stories highlight the impact of this issue?*
4. Small Group Sharing
 - Students pair up and share one statistic and one lived experience they found.
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"How does this information help us make a stronger case?"*
 - *"What gaps still exist in our understanding?"*

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What statistic stood out to you the most today?
 2. How can data and personal stories help us create change?
 3. What do we still need to learn before finalizing our action plan?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:
"Next, we'll hear from community advocates who are working on these issues, and we'll start shaping our own solutions."



6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one way they can use research to push for change.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will include statistics in my action plan recommendations."*
 - *"I will share a personal story that connects to the data."*
 - *"I will look up more information on programs that help students in temporary housing."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Strong arguments are backed by strong evidence. The more we learn, the more power we have to make real change."*





| Lesson 16: Analyzing Policies & School Practices

Objective:

- Understand how school policies impact students, particularly those in temporary housing.
- Critically analyze policies to determine their effectiveness and fairness.
- Express findings through a written policy critique.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"Policies shape our daily experiences in school—how we get resources, how we're treated, and even what opportunities we have. Today, we'll explore how policies impact students in temporary housing and learn how to analyze them critically."

Reinforce the End Goal:

"By understanding school policies, we can advocate for changes that better support students like us."

2. Icebreaker: "Policy Walk" (5 min – Movement Activity)

Activity:

- The facilitator places four signs around the room, labeled:
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
- The facilitator reads statements related to school policies, and students walk to the sign that best represents their opinion.

Sample Statements:

- "Students should have a say in school policies that affect them."
- "School rules are fair to all students, regardless of their housing situation."
- "Every student in temporary housing should automatically get a school-assigned mentor."
- "Transportation policies for students in shelters should be improved."

Discussion:

- After each statement, ask 2–3 students why they chose their position.
- Emphasize how different perspectives shape how policies are made and received.



Key Takeaway:

"Policies impact students differently, and it's important to examine whether they truly meet students' needs."

3. Exploratory Exercise: "How Do Policies Affect Us?" (20 min)

Framing Question:

What are the most important school policies affecting students in temporary housing?

Activity Steps:

1. Identifying School Policies (5 min)

- The facilitator writes on the board: "A policy is a rule or guideline that affects students' education and experience."
- As a class, brainstorm examples of school policies that affect students (e.g., attendance, transportation, disciplinary policies, access to resources, grading policies).
- The facilitator organizes them into categories (Supportive, Harmful, Needs Improvement).

2. Small Group Analysis (15 min)

- Students break into small groups (3-4 students per group).
- Each group selects one policy to analyze and answers:
 - What is the policy?
 - How does it impact students (positively or negatively)?
 - Does this policy support or create barriers for students in temporary housing?
 - What improvements could be made?
- Groups write their responses on chart paper and prepare to share.

Whole Group Reflection:

- Each group presents their findings.
- The facilitator asks: "What patterns do we notice?"

4. Expression Exercise: "Writing a Policy Critique" (20 min)

Framing Statement:

"Now that we've analyzed different policies, let's take a closer look and write a critique of one policy you believe should be improved."



Activity Steps:

1. Choosing a Policy (5 min)

- Students choose one school policy they want to critique from the earlier discussion.

2. Writing the Policy Critique (15 min)

- The facilitator provides a writing structure:

Policy Critique Template:

1. Introduction

- Identify the policy and its purpose.
- Explain why you chose this policy to analyze.

2. Analysis

- How does this policy affect students, especially those in temporary housing?
- Is the policy fair and accessible to all students? Why or why not?
- Are there unintended negative consequences?

3. Proposed Change

- What changes would improve this policy?
- How would your change benefit students?

Sharing (Optional):

- Volunteers read their critiques aloud.
- Facilitator highlights strong points and encourages action.

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

Facilitator prompts:

- What is one school policy you now see differently?
- Why is it important to analyze school policies?
- What's one way students can push for better policies?

Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"In the next lesson, we'll take what we've learned and start exploring ways to advocate for policy changes in schools."



6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

Activity:

Each student writes down or shares one small action they will take to stay informed about school policies.

Examples:

- "I will read my school's handbook to learn more about its policies."
- "I will ask a teacher or counselor about a policy I want to change."
- "I will talk to a peer about a school policy that impacts us."

Closing Message:

"Policies don't change on their own—students have the power to make their voices heard. Keep questioning and learning!"



| Lesson 17: Presentation of Findings

Objective:

- Provide students the opportunity to present their research findings to their peers.
- Strengthen students' public speaking and advocacy skills in a supportive environment.
- Encourage peer feedback and collaboration to refine ideas before the final action plan.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"Today is an important step in our journey. You've done research, gathered data, and explored real-life experiences. Now, it's time to present your findings to each other and receive feedback before we finalize our action plan."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"This will help us build strong recommendations that we will present in our Youth Empowerment Action Plan."*

2. Icebreaker: "Gallery Walk Warm-Up" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - The facilitator places three large poster papers around the room with the following questions:
 1. *What makes a great presentation?*
 2. *What do you hope to learn from your peers today?*
 3. *What feedback is most helpful when improving ideas?*
 - Students walk around and write their thoughts on sticky notes or directly on the posters.
 - Quick Discussion: Facilitator reads some responses and asks:
 - *"What are the top qualities of a strong presentation?"*
 - *"What type of feedback helps us improve?"*

3. Small Group Presentations (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *"Each group will present their research findings on one of the focus areas we identified. Listen carefully, as your feedback will help improve these ideas."*



Activity Steps:

1. Group Presentations
 - Each group presents for 3–5 minutes on:
 - The focus area they researched
 - Key statistics they found
 - Real-life stories or lived experiences
 - Why this issue is urgent
 - Groups can use visual aids (posters, slides, or handwritten notes).
2. Audience Responsibilities
 - While listening, students take notes on:
 - *One thing they learned*
 - *One question they have*
 - *One suggestion for improvement*

4. Peer Feedback Session (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *"Now that we've heard the presentations, let's help each other strengthen our findings."*

Activity Steps:

1. Small Group Feedback Circles
 - Groups rotate to receive feedback from peers.
 - Students provide constructive feedback using the "Glow & Grow" method:
 - Glow: One thing they did well.
 - Grow: One way they could improve.
2. Whole Group Discussion
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *"What were some common strengths in today's presentations?"*
 - *"What areas need improvement before our final action plan?"*

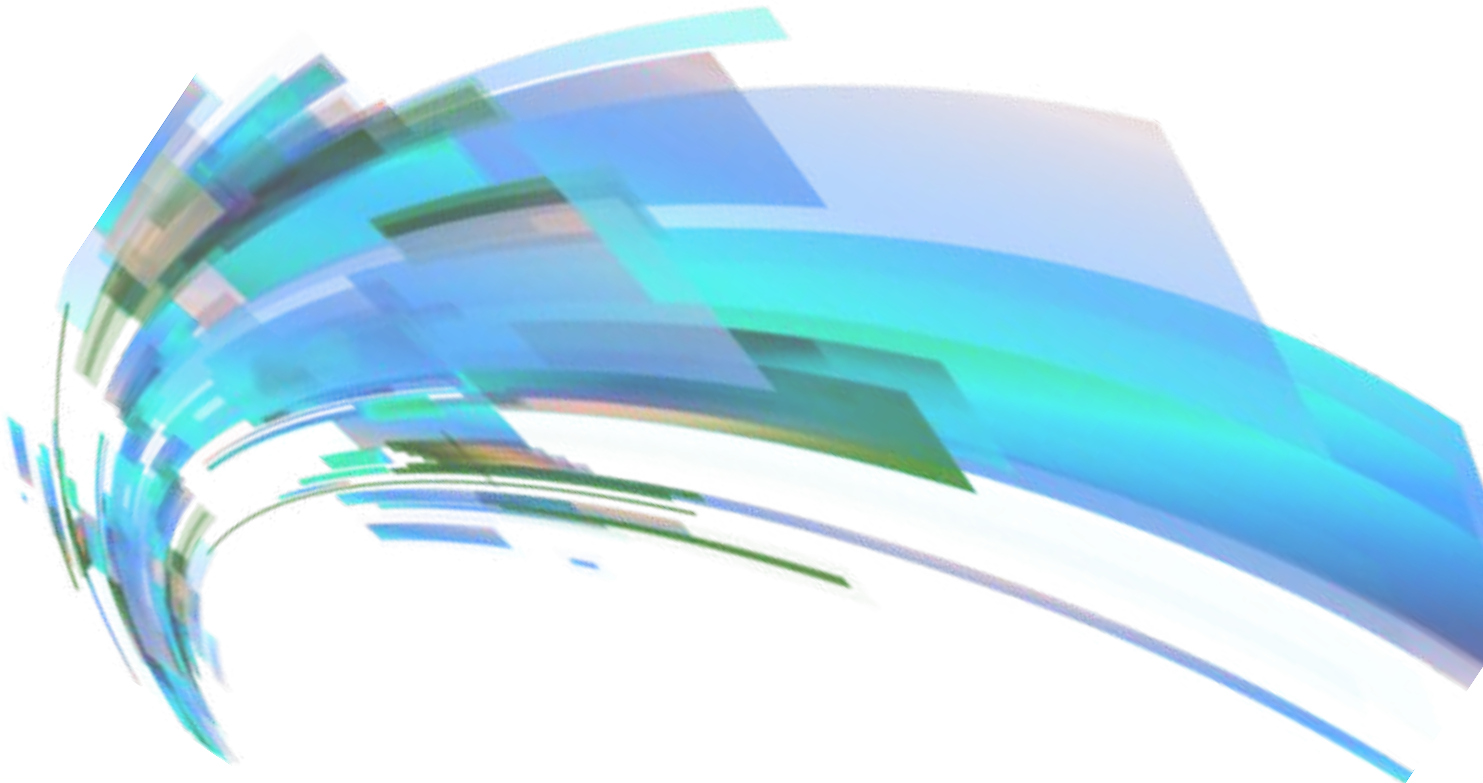
5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one thing you learned from another group today?
 2. How did presenting your research help you feel more confident in your ideas?
 3. What is one thing you want to improve before the final action plan?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:
"Your presentations today were a powerful step. Next, we will refine these findings and start shaping them into real solutions."



6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one way they will use today's feedback to strengthen their action plan.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will add more data to support my argument."*
 - *"I will practice my presentation skills to speak with more confidence."*
 - *"I will refine my recommendations to make them more actionable."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"You are developing the skills to present real solutions for real problems. Keep refining, keep learning, and keep pushing for change."*





| Lesson 18: Who Benefits & Who Suffers?

Objective:

- Understand how power is distributed in education policy.
- Analyze who benefits and who faces challenges due to current school policies.
- Develop critical thinking skills by identifying stakeholders in education.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"Every decision about schools—funding, rules, policies—affects students, but not everyone benefits equally. Today, we'll explore who holds power in education and who is most impacted by their decisions."

Reinforce the End Goal:

"Understanding who benefits and who suffers helps us push for change that supports students who need it most."

2. Icebreaker: "Power Shuffle" (5 min – Movement Activity)

Activity:

- The facilitator reads a statement, and students move to different areas of the room based on whether they believe the statement applies to:
 - Students (S)
 - Teachers (T)
 - School Leaders (SL)
 - Policymakers (P)

Sample Statements:

- "Makes decisions about how schools are funded." (P)
- "Is most affected by school closures." (S)
- "Decides what topics are taught in class." (P, SL)
- "Has the power to change unfair school policies." (T, SL, P)
- "Experiences the most stress due to school rules." (S, T)

Discussion:

- Were there any surprises?
- Who seems to hold the most power in schools?
- Who has the least power but is most affected?



Key Takeaway:

"Policies impact different groups in different ways, and the ones with the most power don't always experience the greatest challenges."

3. Exploratory Exercise: "Who Holds the Power?" (20 min)

Framing Question:

Who makes the biggest decisions in education, and how do those decisions impact students?

Activity Steps:

1. Identifying Key Players (5 min)

The facilitator writes a list of education decision-makers on the board:

- Students (experience the results of policy but have little direct power).
- Teachers (can advocate for students but have limits).
- Principals & School Leaders (enforce policies and make school-wide decisions).
- School District Officials (decide funding, curriculum, and resource distribution).
- State & Federal Policymakers (create education laws and policies).

2. Group Analysis (15 min)

- Divide students into 5 small groups and assign each group one key player.
- Groups answer:
 - What decisions does this group make?
 - Who benefits from their decisions?
 - Who might suffer from their decisions?
 - How can students influence this group's choices?
- Groups write their answers on chart paper and present findings.

Whole Group Reflection:

- How does power shape what happens in schools?
- What happens when students don't have a voice in decisions?

4. Expression Exercise: "Mapping Power in Schools" (20 min)

Framing Statement:

"Now, let's create a 'Power Map' to show how decisions flow in education and who benefits or suffers the most."

Activity Steps:

1. Drawing the Power Map (10 min)

- Students create a visual diagram that shows how power moves in education.
- Example:



- Policymakers (top) → Create school laws → District Officials enforce policies → Principals & Teachers apply them → Students (bottom) experience the results.
- Arrows show who influences whom and who benefits or suffers the most.

2. Identifying Gaps (5 min)

- Students discuss where student voices are missing in the decision-making chain.

3. Writing a Reflection (5 min)

- Students write a short reflection on:
 - One group that has power and how they use it.
 - One group that is impacted but has little power.
 - One way students can gain more influence.

Sharing (Optional):

- Volunteers present their Power Maps or reflections.

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

Facilitator prompts:

- Who holds the most power in education?
- Who benefits most from school policies?
- Who experiences the most challenges?
- How can students increase their influence?

Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"Understanding power helps us push for policies that work for students, not just those in charge. In the next lesson, we'll explore ways to advocate for student-centered policies."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

Activity:

Each student writes down or shares one action they can take to become more informed about education policies.

Examples:

- "I will research who makes decisions about my school district."
- "I will ask a teacher how students can have a voice in school policies."
- "I will read about a law that affects students like me."



| Lesson 19: Student Panel Discussion

Objective:

- Give students the opportunity to discuss their findings and solutions in a structured panel format.
- Strengthen public speaking, critical thinking, and teamwork skills.
- Encourage collaborative dialogue by incorporating a movement-based activity.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"You've done research, explored solutions, and developed your arguments. Now, it's time to put everything together in a student-led discussion where you will share ideas and respond to each other's perspectives."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"This discussion will help prepare us to confidently present our Youth Empowerment Action Plan."*

2. Icebreaker: "Four Corners Discussion" (10 min)

- Activity:
 - The facilitator posts four statements around the room, each relating to a key issue students have studied.
 - Examples of Statements:
 1. *"Providing MetroCards for all students in temporary housing should be the highest priority."*
 2. *"Mental health services are more important than tutoring for students in unstable housing."*
 3. *"School instability is the biggest factor impacting student success."*
 4. *"Providing students with more leadership opportunities will help solve these issues."*
 - Students stand by the statement they agree with most.
 - Discussion:
 - Each group discusses why they chose their statement.
 - Volunteers share why they agree or disagree with different statements.
 - Key takeaway: *"Every issue we've discussed is important, but today's panel will help us decide which solutions will have the biggest impact."*



3. Exploratory Exercise: Structuring the Student Panel (10 min)

- Framing Question: *How do panels work, and what makes them effective?*
- Facilitator explains the structure:
 - Panelists (4-5 students per round) will discuss a topic in front of the group.
 - Moderators (1-2 students per round) will ask questions and keep the discussion moving.
 - Audience Members will take notes and prepare follow-up questions.
- Choosing Panelists & Moderators:
 - Volunteers or assigned roles based on interest.
 - Facilitator ensures everyone gets a chance to participate.

4. Expression Exercise: Student Panel Discussion (30 min)

- Panel Format:
 - Round 1 (10 min):
 - Topic: *"What is the biggest challenge for students in temporary housing?"*
 - Panelists share research findings and personal insights.
 - Moderators ask follow-up questions to deepen the conversation.
 - Round 2 (10 min):
 - Topic: *"What solutions would make the biggest difference?"*
 - Panelists discuss policy changes, school programs, and student-led solutions.
 - Round 3 (10 min):
 - Topic: *"What actions should students take to make these solutions a reality?"*
 - Panelists discuss advocacy strategies and next steps.
- Audience Participation:
 - After each round, audience members ask questions or offer additional perspectives.
 - Facilitator encourages students to support their arguments with facts and experiences.

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

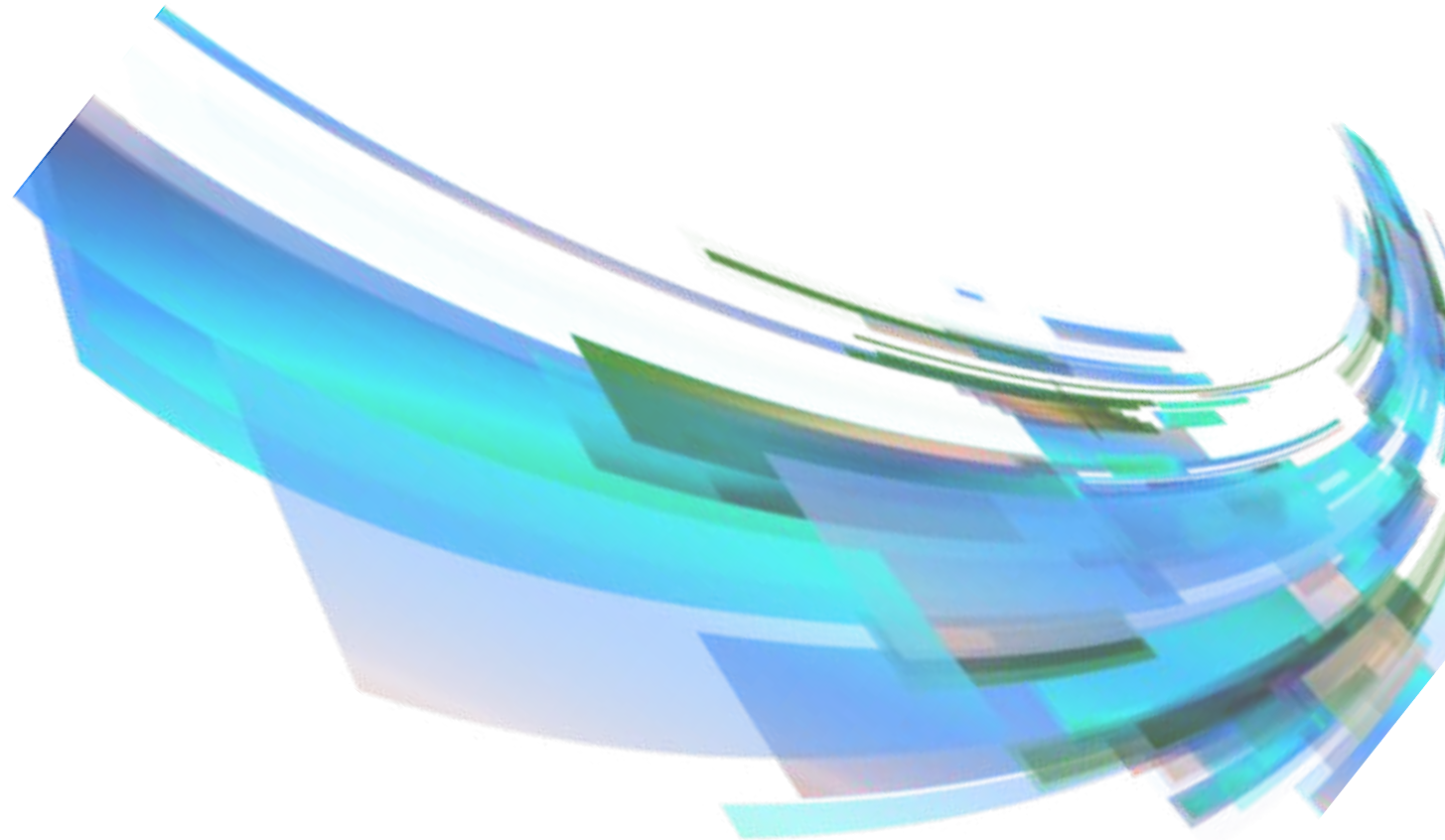
- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What was one powerful argument you heard today?
 2. How did it feel to participate in or listen to the panel discussion?
 3. What is one way you can apply today's discussion to our final action plan?



- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:
"Great discussions lead to strong action. We will use today's insights to refine our final recommendations."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one action they will take after today's discussion.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will refine my talking points for when we present to DOE leadership."*
 - *"I will research an additional fact to support my argument."*
 - *"I will practice my public speaking skills before our next session."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Your voices are powerful, and today's discussion proved that. Let's keep building on this momentum."*





| Lesson 20: "Ripple Effects"

Objective:

Visualize and analyze the chain reactions that result from educational inequities.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"Small problems often create big waves. Let's explore the ripple effects of the challenges we've identified."

2. Icebreaker: "Domino Chain" (5 min)

Students share one small thing that affected their whole day (e.g., missed breakfast led to poor test performance).

3. Exploratory Exercise: "Ripple Map" (20 min)

Each group selects one challenge (e.g., lack of MetroCards). Then they list:

- Immediate effects
- Short-term effects
- Long-term effects

Draw arrows to show progression.

4. Expression Exercise: "Day in the Life" Skit (20 min)

In groups, students act out a day in the life of a student in temporary housing, showing how the issue impacts them hour by hour.

5. Review (5 min)

What's one effect that surprised you?

6. Reflection (5 min)

One way I can bring awareness to these effects is...

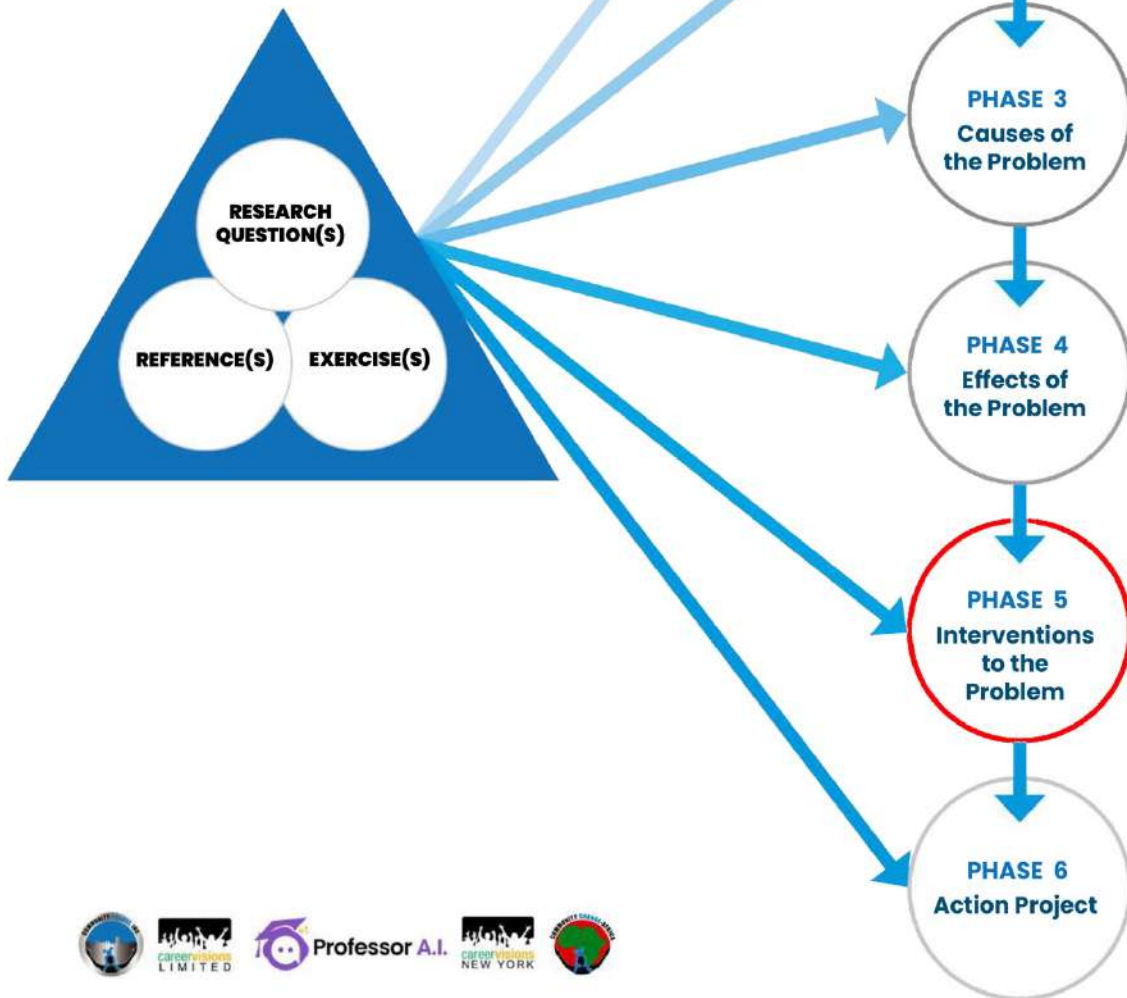
Phase 5: Interventions to the Issue

Community Change

Civic Engagement/Community Service/ Service Learning

To increase students' knowledge of social issues in their community.

To develop students' ability to address social issues.





| Lesson 21: Supports, Solutions & Suggestions

Objective:

- Encourage students to think critically about solutions to school challenges.
- Identify existing programs that support students in temporary housing.
- Develop 3–5 interventions to improve student experiences.
- Use movement and creative thinking to generate ideas.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"We've talked about the challenges students in temporary housing face. Today, we'll shift our focus—what can be done to help? We'll explore existing resources and brainstorm new solutions."

Reinforce the End Goal:

"The ideas we generate today will be part of our action plan for real change."

2. Icebreaker: "Imagine a Perfect School" (10 min – Movement Activity & Game)

Activity:

- Set the Scene: "Close your eyes and imagine a school where everything works perfectly for students. What does it look like? What do students have access to? What support exists?"
- Movement Game: The room is divided into different areas labeled:
 - "Great Teachers & Mentors"
 - "Better School Rules & Policies"
 - "Access to Resources (Food, Housing, Hygiene)"
 - "Transportation & Stability"
 - "Career & College Opportunities"
- The facilitator calls out questions and students move to the area that best represents their answer.
 - "What is the most important part of a perfect school?"
 - "If you could improve one thing about schools, what would it be?"
 - "What would help students in temporary housing the most?"

Debrief Discussion:

- What patterns do we notice in our answers?
- What support systems seem to matter most to students?

Key Takeaway:

"By understanding what makes a school 'ideal,' we can start creating real solutions."



3. Exploring Existing Support Programs (10 min – Interactive Discussion & Movement)

Framing Question:

What resources already exist to help students in temporary housing?

Activity Steps:

1. Matching Game (5 min – Movement Activity)

- The facilitator writes existing programs on index cards and challenges students face on separate cards.
- Example:
 - Challenge: “Students don’t have enough food at home.”
 - Solution: “NYC Community Schools – Provides free meals before and after school.”
- How to Play:
 - Cards are spread out around the room.
 - Students walk around, pick one challenge, and try to find the matching program or accommodation.
 - After all matches are made, students explain their pairings.

2. Facilitator Presentation (5 min)

The facilitator explains Programs & Accommodations Available to Students in Temporary Housing (chart below).

Issue	Program/Accommodation	Details
Food Insecurity	NYC Community Schools	Provides free breakfast, lunch, and afterschool meals.
	Food Pantries in Schools	Some NYC schools have on-site food pantries for students.
Clothing & Hygiene	Operation Warm NYC	Provides free coats for students in need.
	Clothing Closets in Schools	Select schools offer access to free clothing and hygiene products.
Clean Clothes Access	Wash & Learn Initiative	NYC libraries partner with laundromats to provide free laundry services.



Issue	Program/Accommodation	Details
	School-Based Laundry Facilities	Some schools have washing machines for student use.
Job & Career Readiness	NYC Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)	Paid summer jobs for youth ages 14-24, with priority for homeless youth.
	Youth Workforce Development Programs	Free job training and resume support for students.
Housing & Stability	McKinney-Vento Act	Federal law that allows students to stay in their original school even if they move shelters.
	NYC DHS Youth Shelters	Youth-specific shelters with educational support.
Transportation	NYC Student MetroCards	Free bus/subway cards for students in temporary housing.
	DOE Bus Services for Homeless Students	Some students qualify for yellow school bus transportation.

3. Discussion Questions (5 min):

- Did you know about these programs?
- Have you or someone you know used any of these resources?
- What gaps still exist? What support is missing?

Key Takeaway:

"There are programs out there, but they don't always reach every student in need. That's why we need to think of new interventions."

4. Small Groups Develop 3-5 Interventions (20 min)

Framing Question:

What new solutions can help students in temporary housing succeed?



Activity Steps:

1. Small Group Brainstorming (15 min)

- Divide students into small groups (3-4 per group).
- Each group picks one area to improve (e.g., food access, transportation, academic support).
- Groups brainstorm 3-5 new interventions that could address gaps.
- They write their ideas on chart paper with headings:
 - Problem: What's the issue?
 - Solution: What's the intervention?
 - Who Can Help?: What school leaders or organizations could support this?

Examples:

- Problem: Many students don't have clean clothes.
- Solution: Install laundry machines in all NYC schools.
- Who Can Help?: The DOE, school administrators, community organizations.
- Problem: Transportation is unreliable for shelter students.
- Solution: Expand bus routes and guarantee MetroCards.
- Who Can Help?: NYC Transit, DOE, city officials.

2. Gallery Walk & Peer Feedback (5 min – Movement Activity)

- Groups hang up their charts around the room.
- Students walk around reading each group's solutions and add sticky note comments:
 - "This is a great idea because..."
 - "Consider adding..."
 - "Who would pay for this?"
- Groups return to their posters and read feedback.

Whole Group Reflection:

- Which solutions seemed the most practical?
- Which ideas sparked the most discussion?
- How could students push for these changes in real life?

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

Facilitator prompts:

- What was one solution that stood out to you?
- How can we use what we learned today to create real change?
- What's one next step we can take?



Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"Next, we'll turn these solutions into action—figuring out how to present them to school leaders and decision-makers."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

Activity:

Each student writes down or shares one action they will take to refine their solution ideas.

Examples:

- "I will research how other schools handle this issue."
- "I will ask my counselor if any of these solutions are possible."
- "I will talk to a teacher about advocating for these ideas."

Closing Message:

"Change starts with an idea, but action turns ideas into reality. Let's keep pushing for the solutions students deserve!"





| Lesson 22: Case Studies on Effective Programs

Objective:

- Introduce students to successful youth empowerment programs that have addressed similar challenges.
- Help students analyze what makes these programs effective and how they can apply similar strategies.
- Prepare students to incorporate evidence-based solutions into their Youth Empowerment Action Plan.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"We've spent time identifying problems and developing ideas for solutions. Today, we'll look at real programs that have successfully empowered youth, so we can learn from them."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"By understanding what has worked in other places, we can create stronger recommendations for our action plan."*

2. Icebreaker: "Success Shuffle" (10 min)

- Activity:
 - Facilitator writes the names of successful youth programs on index cards and scatters them around the room.
 - Students walk around, pick up a card, and read about a program.
 - After a few minutes, students find someone with a different program and exchange information—explaining what they learned.
 - Whole Group Discussion: Facilitator asks:
 - *"What did you notice about these programs?"*
 - *"What do they have in common?"*

3. Exploratory Exercise – Case Studies: Researching Successful Youth Empowerment Models (20 min)

- Framing Question: *What makes a youth empowerment program effective?*

Activity Steps:

1. Introduce 3–5 Case Studies
 - Facilitator provides brief summaries or articles on successful programs. Examples include:
 - My Brother's Keeper (NYC) – Mentorship and leadership opportunities for young men of color.



- Covenant House (Nationwide) – Provides housing, job training, and education for homeless youth.
 - Youth Action Board (Chicago) – A group of students who work with city leaders to improve housing policies for youth.
 - Peer Health Exchange (Multiple Cities) – Trains high school students to lead health and wellness programs for their peers.
 - The Door (NYC) – A comprehensive program offering housing, legal aid, education, and career support to at-risk youth.
2. Small Group Analysis
 - Each group selects one case study to research further.
 - Groups answer the following questions:
 - *What problem did this program solve?*
 - *What made this program successful?*
 - *How can we apply similar ideas to our action plan?*
 3. Whole Group Sharing
 - Groups present their findings to the class.
 - Facilitator writes key takeaways on the board.
 - Key takeaway: *“Effective programs share common strategies—strong leadership, student involvement, and real support systems.”*

4. Expression Exercise: Designing Our Own Solutions (20 min)

- Framing Statement: *“Now that we’ve seen what works, how can we use these ideas to strengthen our own action plan?”*

Activity Steps:

1. Building on What Works
 - Each group modifies or expands an existing idea in their action plan based on what they learned from case studies.
 - Example:
 - If a group is working on mental health support, they may decide to include peer mentoring, inspired by My Brother’s Keeper.
 - If a group is working on school stability, they may suggest a student-led task force like the Youth Action Board.
2. Small Group Discussion:
 - Students share their revised ideas with each other and explain how the case study inspired their solution.
3. Whole Group Reflection:
 - Facilitator asks:
 - *“Which programs inspired you the most?”*
 - *“How can we make sure our solutions are realistic and achievable?”*

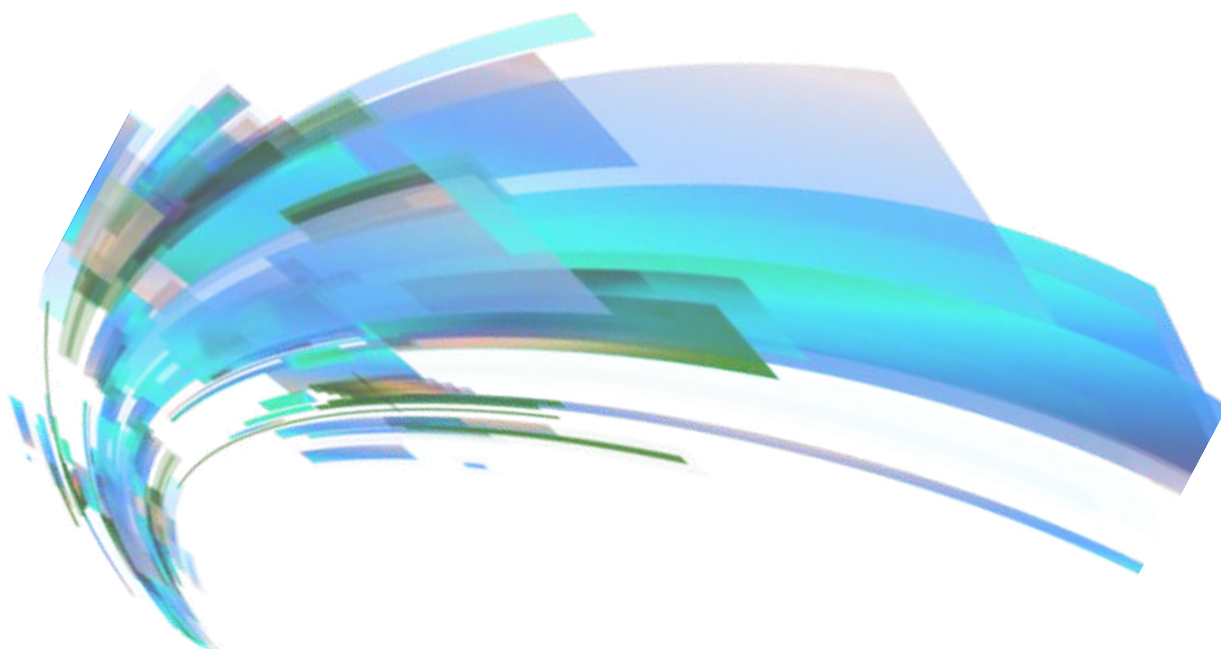
5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one common factor among successful youth programs?
 2. What is one idea from today's lesson that you want to include in our action plan?
 3. Why is it important to learn from existing programs instead of starting from scratch?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"The best ideas come from building on what already works. Now, we'll refine our action plan to make it even stronger."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one thing they will apply to their work moving forward.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will research more youth programs for ideas."*
 - *"I will refine my solution to make it more actionable."*
 - *"I will look at how other students have created change in their schools."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"You don't have to change the world alone—learning from others who have succeeded will help us make real change."*





| Lesson 23: Testing Our Solutions

Objective:

- Test proposed solutions through peer feedback.
- Refine ideas based on strengths, weaknesses, and feasibility.
- Use movement-based activities to engage students in the refinement process.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"We've brainstormed powerful solutions to support students in temporary housing. Today, we'll put those ideas to the test—getting peer feedback, refining our solutions, and making them even stronger."

Reinforce the End Goal:

"The stronger our solutions, the more likely we are to create real change. Let's sharpen our ideas before we present them!"

2. Icebreaker: "Would You Fund It?" (10 min – Movement Game)

Activity:

- The facilitator posts large signs around the room labeled:
 - "Absolutely Fund It!"
 - "Needs Some Work!"
 - "Not Feasible!"
- The facilitator reads hypothetical student-led solutions (some realistic, some exaggerated).
- Example solutions:
 - "Provide free MetroCards to all students, even those outside NYC!"
 - "Offer free breakfast, lunch, and dinner at school!"
 - "Build on-campus housing for students experiencing homelessness!"
- After each solution, students move to the sign that best represents their opinion.
- The facilitator asks students to defend their choice and discuss what would make the idea more realistic.

Debrief Discussion:

- What makes an idea strong and realistic?
- What kinds of solutions get dismissed even if they are good ideas?
- How do we make our ideas convincing and achievable?



Key Takeaway:

“Even great ideas need to be practical. Today, we’ll refine our own solutions to make sure they can truly work.”

3. Peer Feedback Roundtable (20 min – Movement & Small Group Activity)

Framing Question:

How do we make our solutions stronger and more realistic?

Activity Steps:

1. Solution Stations (10 min – Small Group Work)

- Each group hangs up their solution on chart paper at different tables.
- Students rotate between stations, reviewing different solutions.
- At each station, students provide constructive feedback using sticky notes:
 - “This is strong because...”
 - “One way to improve this is...”
 - “Who will fund it?”
 - “What’s a possible obstacle?”

2. Refining Our Solutions (10 min – Group Work)

- Each group returns to their station, reads the feedback, and updates their solution:
 - Strengthen weak points.
 - Address concerns about funding, feasibility, or execution.
 - Adjust language to make it more persuasive.

Whole Group Reflection:

- What was the most useful piece of feedback your group received?
- How did your solution change based on feedback?

4. The “Shark Tank” Challenge (20 min – Fun Pitching Game)

Framing Statement:

“Now that we’ve refined our solutions, let’s put them to the ultimate test—convincing a panel of ‘decision-makers’ that our idea should be implemented.”

Activity Steps:

1. Pitch Preparation (5 min)

- Each group refines their solution into a quick pitch:
 - The Problem: What issue does this address?
 - The Solution: What’s the intervention?
 - Why It’s Realistic: How will it work?
 - Who Can Help?: Who will fund or implement this?

2. Presenting to the “Sharks” (10 min – Movement Activity)



- Select 3–4 students (or teachers, if available) to play "The Sharks" (school decision-makers).
- Each group presents their idea in 1 minute.
- The "Sharks" can ask follow-up questions or suggest refinements.

3. Audience Vote (5 min – Movement Activity)

- After all pitches, students move to different parts of the room to vote on the best solution:
 - "Best Overall Idea"
 - "Most Realistic Solution"
 - "Most Innovative Solution"
- Winning groups receive peer recognition and encouragement.

Whole Group Discussion:

- Which solutions were the strongest?
- How did feedback and refinement make ideas better?
- How can we prepare to present our best ideas to real decision-makers?

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

Facilitator prompts:

- What did you learn about making solutions stronger?
- How does feedback help make an idea more realistic?
- What's one next step we should take with our solutions?

Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"The next step is preparing to present our final action plan. Today's work helps us get closer to real change!"

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

Activity:

Each student writes down or shares one action they will take to improve their solution.

Examples:

- "I will research whether other schools have done this before."
- "I will adjust our funding plan to make it more realistic."
- "I will think about how to make our solution easier to implement."

Closing Message:

"Great ideas don't happen overnight—they require refinement, feedback, and persistence. Let's keep pushing to make our ideas stronger!"



| Lesson 24: "Imagine If..."

Objective:

Help students dream big about possible solutions and design their own interventions.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"Solutions start with imagination. Let's design creative ways to solve the issues we care about."

2. Icebreaker: "Imagine If" Circle (5 min)

Students complete the sentence:

"Imagine if every student had access to..."

3. Exploratory Exercise: "Intervention Brainstorm" (20 min)

In groups, students pick one problem and answer:

- What's already being done?
- What's missing?
- What would we do if we had the resources?

4. Expression Exercise: "Pitch Your Program" (20 min)

Groups create a name, slogan, and outline of their proposed intervention.

Optional: Draw a flyer or make a 30-second pitch.

5. Review (5 min)

Which idea do you think could work right now?

6. Reflection (5 min)

One skill I have that could help make this solution real is...

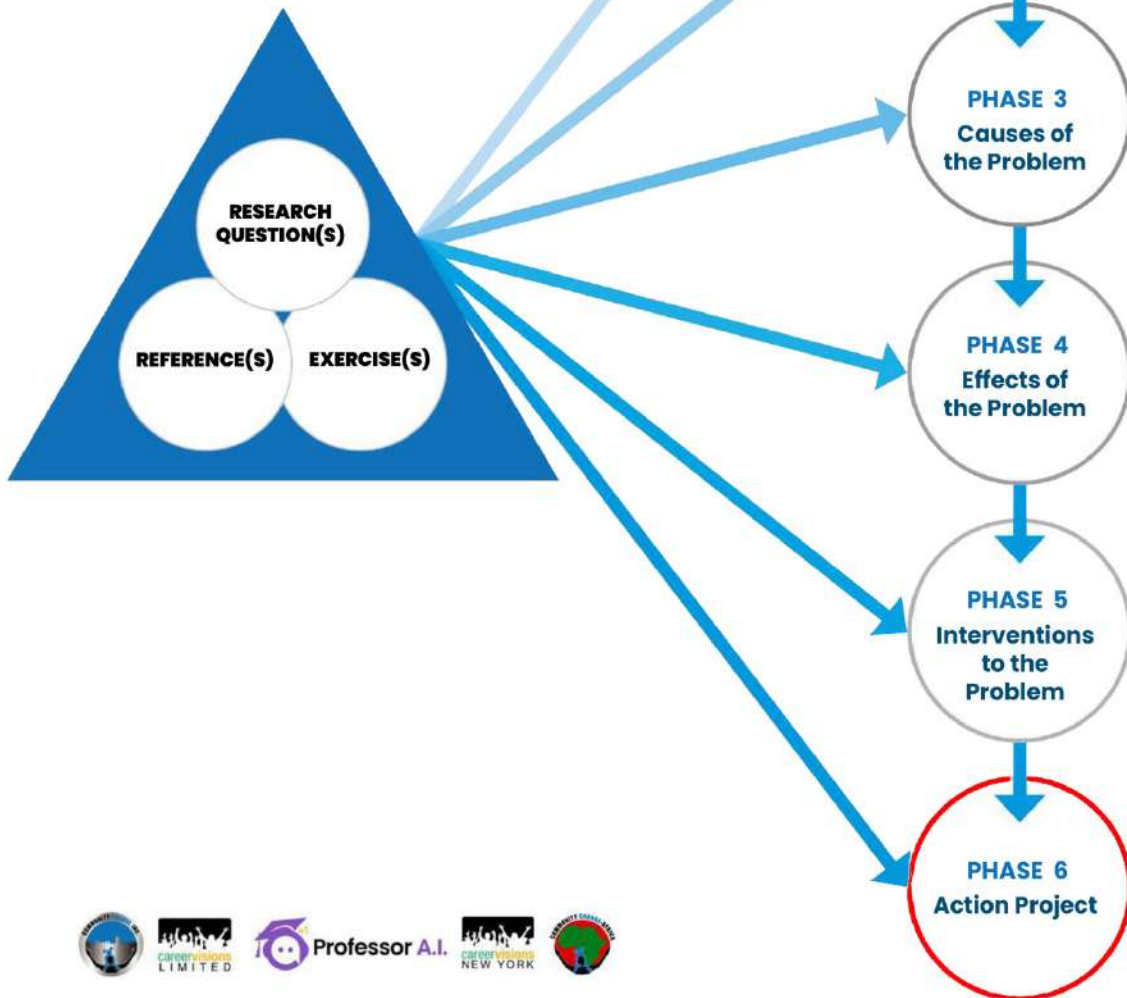
Phase 6: Action

Community Change

Civic Engagement/Community Service/ Service Learning

To increase students' knowledge of social issues
in their community.

To develop students' ability to address social
issues.





| Lesson 25: What Happens If We Do Nothing?

Objective:

- Encourage students to think critically about the long-term effects of inaction on the key issues they identified.
- Strengthen students' sense of urgency in advocating for change.
- Help students visualize potential consequences and compare them to possible solutions.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"We've spent time researching challenges and brainstorming solutions. But today, we're going to ask an important question—what happens if we don't take action?"*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"Understanding the consequences of inaction will help us make a stronger case for change in our Youth Empowerment Action Plan."*

2. Icebreaker: "Future Headlines" (10 min)

- Activity:
 - Facilitator places two large sheets of paper on opposite sides of the room labeled:
 - "A Future Where We Took Action"
 - "A Future Where Nothing Changed"
 - Students walk to the paper that resonates with them first and write a future newspaper headline for that scenario.
 - Examples:
 - Action Taken: *"NYC Increases MetroCards for Students in Temporary Housing, Attendance Rates Improve!"*
 - No Action Taken: *"Another Year, Another 10,000 Students Forced to Change Schools."*
 - Discussion: Facilitator asks:
 - *"How did it feel to write each headline?"*
 - *"What do we notice about the headlines under 'No Action Taken'?"*



3. Analyzing the Long-Term Effects of Inaction (20 min)

- Framing Question: *What happens if we ignore the issues we've identified?*

Activity Steps:

1. Small Group Analysis
 - Break students into small groups (3-4 students per group).
 - Each group selects one of the key issues (e.g., lack of transportation, school instability, mental health support).
 - Groups discuss and map out what would happen over time if nothing changed using a Cause & Effect Chart:
 - Short-Term Effects (6 months - 1 year) → *Missed school, students falling behind.*
 - Medium-Term Effects (2-5 years) → *Lower graduation rates, increased dropout rates.*
 - Long-Term Effects (10+ years) → *Limited career opportunities, continued cycle of housing instability.*
2. Whole Group Sharing
 - Groups present their Cause & Effect Charts to the class.
 - Key takeaway: *"Problems don't stay the same—they either get better because we take action, or they get worse because we ignore them."*
4. Expression Exercise: The Cost of Doing Nothing (20 min)
 - Framing Statement: *"Every decision comes with a cost—including the decision to do nothing."*

Activity Steps:

1. Writing Prompt:
 - Students complete the statement:
 - *"If nothing changes, students like me will..."*
 - *"If we take action, students like me will..."*
 - Encourage students to think about both personal and community-level consequences.
2. Pair & Share:
 - Students pair up and share their responses with a partner.
 - Volunteers read their statements aloud to the whole class.
3. Discussion:
 - *"What patterns do we notice?"*
 - *"How does knowing the cost of doing nothing motivate us to take action?"*



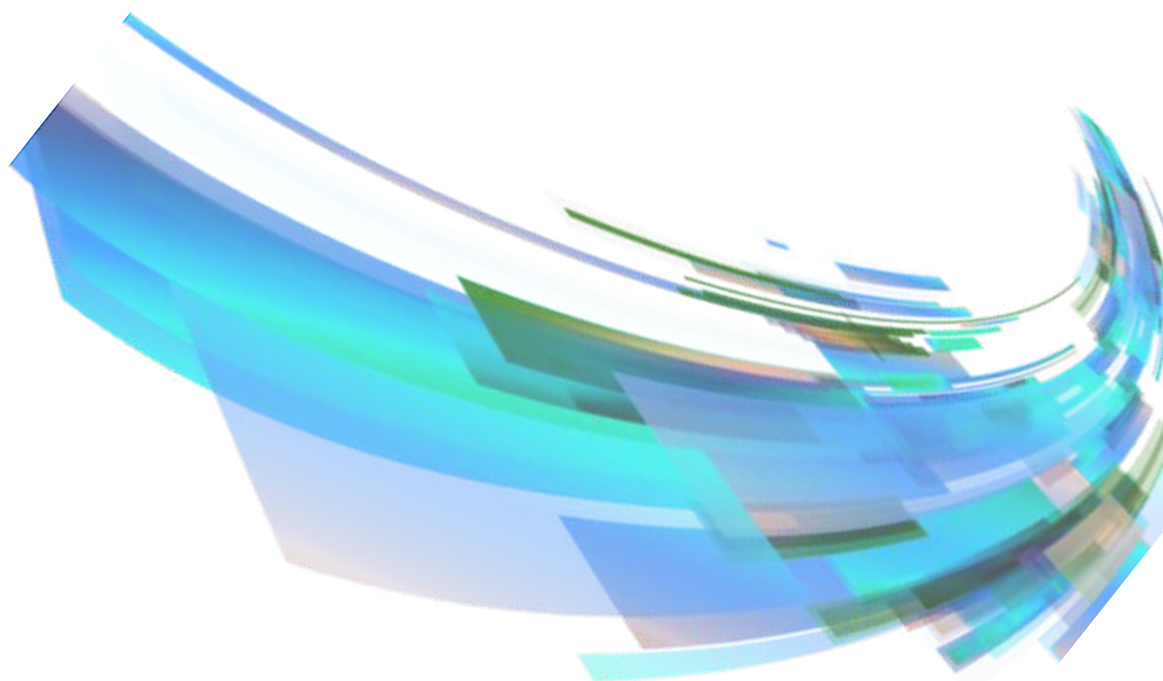
5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one long-term consequence that stood out to you today?
 2. How does seeing the cost of inaction change the way you think about our action plan?
 3. What is one way we can make sure we take action and not just talk about problems?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"Now that we know what's at stake, it's time to finalize the solutions we want to push forward."

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one way they will commit to taking action.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will talk to school leaders about what we discussed today."*
 - *"I will help draft a strong argument for why change is needed."*
 - *"I will make sure my voice is heard when we present our plan."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Nothing changes unless people demand it. We have the knowledge and the power—now let's use it."*





| Lesson 26: “Theory of Change in Action”

Objective:

Youth will understand and co-create a Theory of Change for improving school and community outcomes for vulnerable youth populations, especially students in temporary housing or foster care. They’ll do this through team collaboration, movement, and visual storytelling.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator Message:

“Today, we’re becoming *architects of change*. You’re going to build a Theory of Change—a powerful tool that connects your ideas to real action for students who are often overlooked.”

2. Icebreaker: “If I Could...” Circle Game (5 min)

Activity:

Stand in a circle. One person steps into the middle and says:

“If I could change one thing for students in temporary housing or foster care, I’d...”

Everyone who agrees or feels the same takes one step forward and then back.

Repeat 4–5 times with new volunteers.

Debrief:

“What themes did we hear?”

“What does this tell us about what matters most?”

3. Exploratory Exercise: “Theory of Change Relay” (25 min)

Framing Question:

What does it take to make lasting change in schools and communities?

Set-Up:

Place four labeled poster stations around the room:

- 1. The Problem: What’s wrong?
- 2. Root Causes: Why does it exist?
- 3. Solutions/Interventions: What could help?
- 4. Desired Outcome: What would success look like?

Activity Steps:

- Divide students into 4 teams.
- Each team rotates through the stations every 5 minutes.



- At each station, students add sticky notes or draw visuals to answer the prompt.
- When teams return to their original station, they read and refine what others added.

Wrap-Up Discussion:

"What connections do you see?"

"Did any new ideas surprise you?"

"How do these steps create a path from problem to solution?"

4. Expression Exercise: "Design Your Theory of Change Poster" (20 min)

Activity:

Each student or pair creates a visual Theory of Change map using a simple structure:

- Problem → Causes → Solutions/Supports → Desired Outcome

Creative Options:

- Use drawings, words, symbols, flowcharts, or even comics.
- Optional: Include "What We Can Do As Youth" at the bottom.

Share Out:

Invite students to do a Gallery Walk or present their posters to a partner.

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

Facilitator prompts:

- What's one thing a Theory of Change helps us do?
- Why is it important to understand both the *problem* and the *cause*?
- What's one solution you feel passionate about?

6. Reflection: "One Step Toward Change" (5 min)

Prompt:

What's *one small action* you can take this week to move your theory of change forward?

Examples:

- "Talk to my principal about peer mentoring."
- "Share my poster with a classmate or teacher."
- "Research a youth-led program that does what I care about."

"Every big change starts with a clear vision. Your Theory of Change can become a blueprint for real-world action."



| Lesson 27: Action Plan Drafting

Objective:

- Guide students in structuring and drafting their Youth Empowerment Action Plan.
- Help students translate their research and ideas into actionable recommendations.
- Incorporate a fun, movement-based activity to keep students engaged while brainstorming solutions.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"We've explored challenges, researched solutions, and developed strong arguments. Now, it's time to put everything together and start writing our Youth Empowerment Action Plan."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"This document will outline real solutions that we will present to Deputy Chancellor Cristina Meléndez and other decision-makers."*

2. Icebreaker: "Idea Relay Race" (10 min)

- Activity:
 - Setup: Divide students into teams of 4–5. Each team stands in a line at one side of the room. At the other side, place a large poster board or chart paper for each team.
 - Instructions:
 - The first student runs to the board and writes one key action that should be in the plan (e.g., *"Provide MetroCards for all students in temporary housing"*).
 - They run back and pass the marker to the next student.
 - The next student adds to the idea or writes a new action.
 - The relay continues until all students have contributed.
 - Debrief Discussion:
 - *"Which ideas showed up the most?"*
 - *"How do these ideas connect to what we've learned?"*

3. Structuring the Action Plan (15 min)

- Framing Question: *What makes an action plan clear and effective?*
- Facilitator presents a simple outline:

Youth Empowerment Action Plan Template



1. Introduction: Why is this plan important? Who does it support?
 2. Key Challenges Identified: The top issues students in temporary housing face.
 3. Proposed Solutions: What changes do we recommend?
 4. Action Steps: How will these changes be implemented? Who is responsible?
 5. Expected Impact: What will improve if these changes are made?
- Whole Group Discussion:
 - *"Which section do you think will be the hardest to write? Why?"*
 - *"What's the most important part of an action plan?"*

4. Small Group Writing & Brainstorming (25 min)

- Activity Steps:
 1. Divide Students into Small Groups (each group works on one section of the action plan).
 - Group 1: Introduction & Purpose
 - Group 2: Key Challenges Identified
 - Group 3: Proposed Solutions
 - Group 4: Action Steps & Implementation
 - Group 5: Expected Impact & Conclusion
 2. Writing & Collaboration
 - Groups write bullet points or short paragraphs for their section.
 - Facilitator moves between groups to offer guidance and feedback.
 3. Sharing & Refining
 - Groups briefly present their drafts.
 - The class offers feedback and suggestions for improvement.

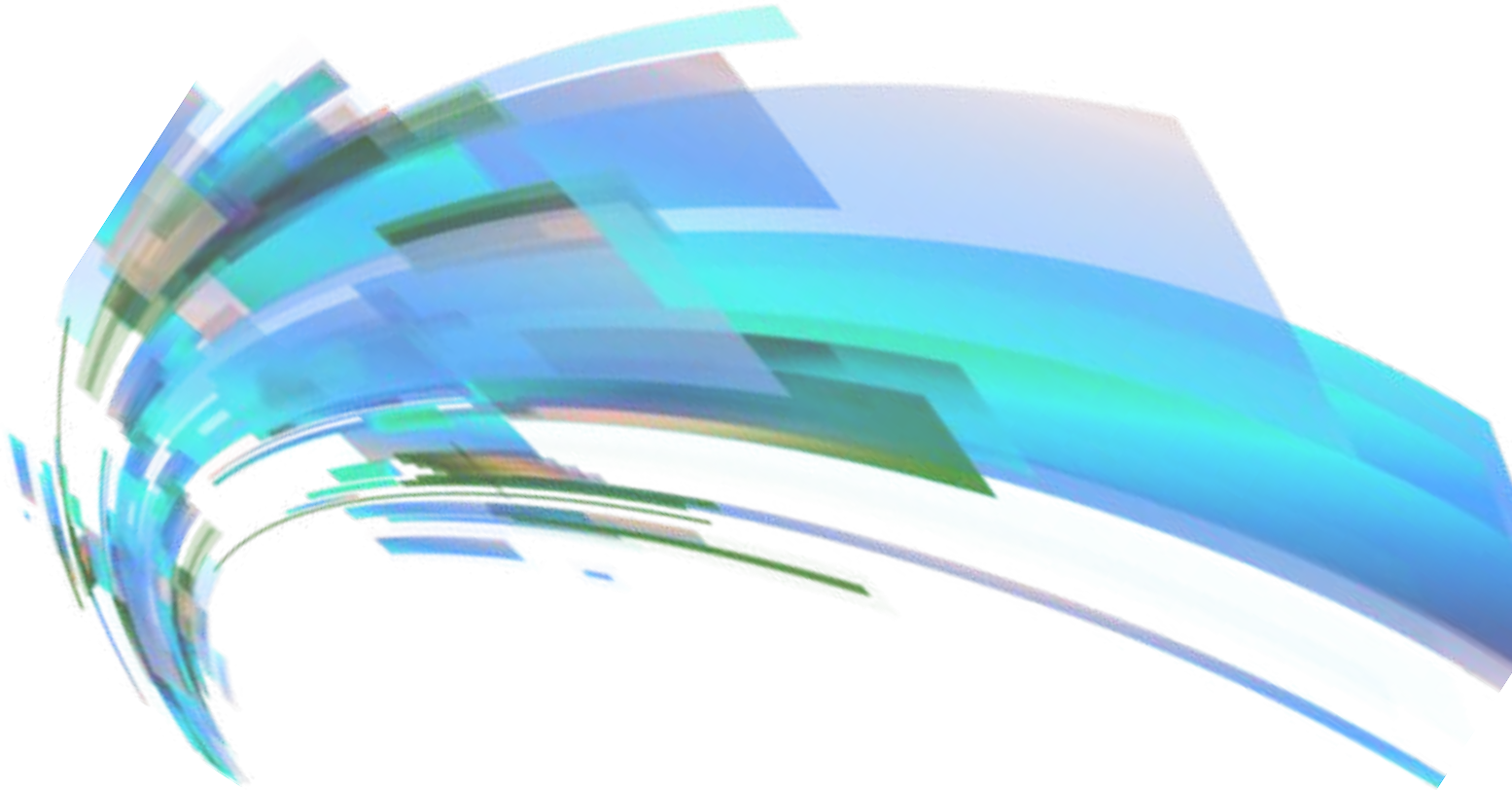
5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What was easier or harder than expected when drafting the action plan?
 2. How does writing the plan help us think through solutions more clearly?
 3. What is one way we can make sure this plan is realistic and effective?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:
"Now that we have a draft, we will refine it and prepare for our final presentation."



6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one specific action they will take to improve the action plan.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will research one more program to include in our recommendations."*
 - *"I will refine our proposed solutions to make them clearer."*
 - *"I will work on making my section more persuasive."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"This is our blueprint for change. The stronger our plan, the bigger our impact."*





| Lesson 28: Rubric Development

Objective:

- Guide students in co-creating a Youth Empowerment Rubric to measure the effectiveness of their action plan.
- Help students define success criteria and understand how to evaluate impact.
- Incorporate a fun movement-based activity to make the process engaging.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"Now that we've drafted our Youth Empowerment Action Plan, we need to decide how we will measure its success. Today, we'll create a rubric to evaluate whether our solutions are making an impact."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"A strong action plan isn't just about ideas—it's about real change. This rubric will help us track our progress and hold decision-makers accountable."*

2. Icebreaker: "Success Sprint" (10 min)

- Activity:
 - Setup: Label four corners of the room with the words "Strong Impact," "Some Impact," "Little Impact," and "No Impact."
 - Instructions:
 - Facilitator reads a hypothetical scenario (e.g., *"A school implements a new mentoring program, but only 5 students participate."*).
 - Students run to the corner that matches their opinion of the impact level.
 - Once at their chosen corner, students discuss why they chose that level with those around them.
 - Debrief Discussion:
 - *"What patterns do we notice?"*
 - *"How do we decide what makes an impact strong or weak?"*
 - Key takeaway: *"We need clear criteria to evaluate success. That's what we'll build today with our Youth Empowerment Rubric."*

3. Defining Success: What Makes an Effective Solution? (10 min)

- Framing Question: *How do we know if our action plan is working?*
- Whole Class Brainstorm:
 - Facilitator asks:



- "What should success look like for our action plan?"
- "What factors should we measure?"
- Write student responses on the board. Expected answers might include:
 - Reach: How many students benefit?
 - Implementation: Are schools actually using our recommendations?
 - Student Feedback: Do students feel supported and empowered?
 - Long-Term Impact: Are students in temporary housing seeing real change?

4. Small Group Work: Building the Youth Empowerment Rubric (20 min)

- Activity Steps:
 1. Divide students into groups (4-5 students per group).
 2. Each group focuses on one evaluation category (e.g., Reach, Implementation, Student Feedback, Long-Term Impact).
 3. Groups develop criteria for 4 levels of success in their category (e.g., Excellent, Good, Needs Improvement, Not Effective).
 4. Groups write their rubric criteria on large chart paper or a shared digital document.

Example for "Student Feedback" Category:

Level	Description
Excellent	80%+ of students report feeling more supported and empowered.
Good	50-79% of students report positive changes.
Needs Improvement	25-49% of students feel a small difference.
Not Effective	Less than 25% of students see any change.

5. Whole Group Review & Finalizing the Rubric (15 min)

- Each group presents their rubric criteria to the class.
- Facilitator leads a discussion to refine the final rubric.
 - "Does this make sense for evaluating success?"
 - "Are there any missing categories?"
- The class finalizes the rubric by combining the best ideas from each group.



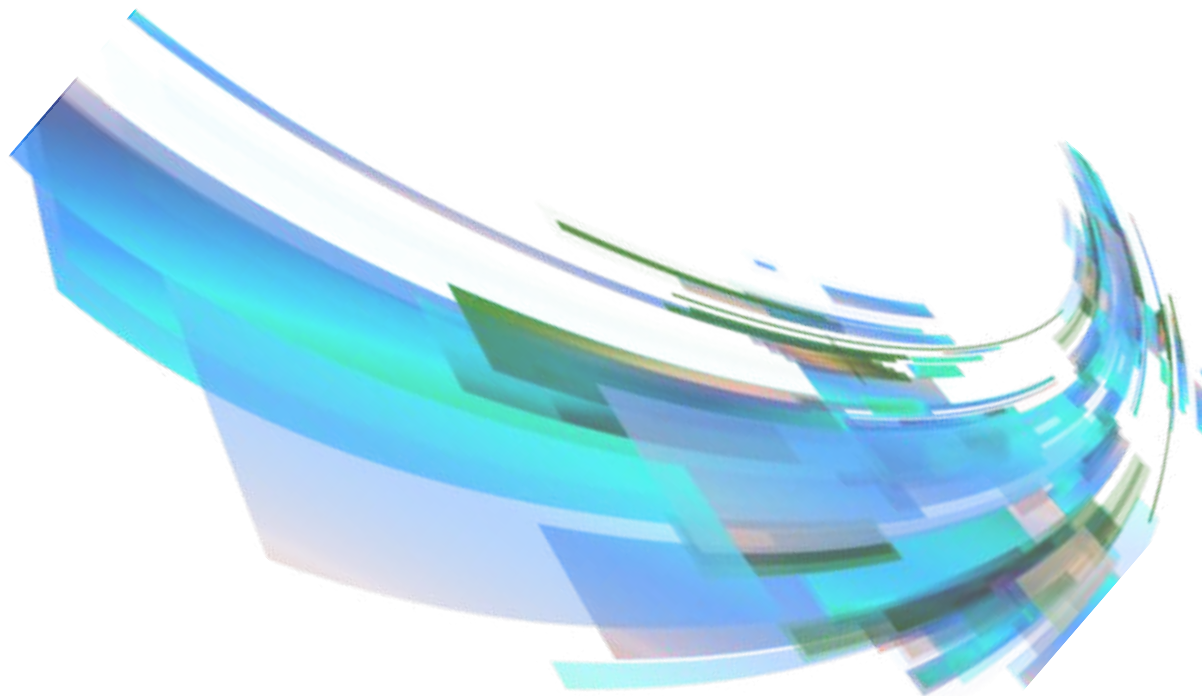
6. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

- Facilitator prompts:
 1. Why is it important to measure the impact of our action plan?
 2. How does creating a rubric help us hold leaders accountable?
 3. What is one thing you learned today about evaluating success?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"A strong movement isn't just about starting something—it's about tracking progress and making sure it creates real change."

7. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one way they will use the rubric in the future.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will use this rubric to check if my school is following through on its promises."*
 - *"I will explain these success measures when we present our action plan."*
 - *"I will track progress in my own school and report back next semester."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Our ideas are powerful, and now we have a way to measure their impact. Let's use this rubric to make sure change actually happens."*





| Lesson 29: Structuring Our Action Plan

Objective:

- Organize our Youth Empowerment Action Plan into clear, structured sections.
- Ensure each solution is well-documented with clear steps for implementation.
- Use movement-based activities to keep engagement high while structuring ideas.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"We've developed strong solutions to support students in temporary housing—now, we need to organize them into a clear action plan. Today, we'll structure our ideas into a plan that decision-makers can use to create real change."

Reinforce the End Goal:

"A well-organized action plan helps ensure that great ideas don't just stay ideas—they become real solutions!"

2. Icebreaker: "Building the Plan" (10 min – Movement Game)

Activity:

- The facilitator writes different action plan components on large sheets of paper and places them in different parts of the room:
 - The Problem – What issue are we addressing?
 - The Solution – What change are we proposing?
 - Steps to Implement – What needs to happen first, second, and third?
 - Who Can Help? – Which school leaders, policymakers, or organizations can support this?
 - What Resources Are Needed? – What money, materials, or programs will be required?
- How the Game Works:
 - Students start at one station and contribute ideas by writing on sticky notes.
 - Every 2 minutes, students move to the next station, read what's written, and add new ideas or edit existing ones.
 - By the end, each station will have a strong foundation for an action plan section!

Debrief Discussion:

- Which section seemed the easiest to complete?



- Which section was the hardest?
- How do all of these parts fit together to create a strong action plan?

Key Takeaway:

"An action plan needs structure—every part plays a role in making sure solutions can happen."

3. Organizing Our Action Plan (20 min – Small Group Work)

Framing Question:

How do we turn our ideas into a structured, step-by-step plan?

Activity Steps:

1. Assigning Sections (5 min)

- Divide students into small groups (3–4 students per group).
- Each group is assigned one section of the action plan to refine based on the work from the icebreaker.

2. Writing Action Plan Sections (15 min)

- Groups work together to write and refine their assigned section on chart paper using the following format:

Action Plan Section	Guiding Questions
The Problem	What is the issue we are trying to fix? Why is it important?
The Solution	What change do we propose? What impact will it have?
Steps to Implement	What steps need to happen first, second, and third? Who will take action?
Who Can Help?	Which school leaders, policymakers, or organizations can support this idea?
What Resources Are Needed?	What funding, programs, materials, or support do we need?

- Groups write their section clearly and prepare to share it with the class.

Whole Group Reflection:

- Which sections were easy to fill in?
- Where do we still need more information or detail?

4. The “Action Plan Relay” (20 min – Fun Movement Activity)

Framing Statement:

“Now that we have structured our action plan, let’s test how well it flows by playing an Action Plan Relay!”

Activity Steps:



1. Relay Set-Up (5 min)

- The five sections of the action plan (Problem, Solution, Steps, Support, Resources) are each assigned to a station in the classroom.
- Each group starts at their station with their assigned section.

2. The Relay Game (10 min – Movement & Collaboration)

- Round 1:
 - Groups rotate to the next station and read what the previous group wrote.
 - They add any missing details or refine weak points.
- Round 2:
 - Groups rotate one more time and double-check the section for clarity and strength.
 - They mark anything that still needs work.

3. Final Review & Reflection (5 min)

- Each group returns to their original station and reviews their section.
- Volunteers read each section aloud to ensure the action plan flows smoothly.

Whole Group Discussion:

- Does the action plan make sense as a whole?
- What changes need to be made before presenting it?

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

Facilitator prompts:

- What is the most important part of a strong action plan?
- How did teamwork help us refine our ideas?
- What is one thing we need to improve before finalizing our plan?

Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"Next, we'll finalize our action plan and prepare to present it to decision-makers. We're getting closer to making change happen!"

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

Activity:

Each student writes down or shares one next step they will take to improve or support the action plan.

Examples:

- "I will research funding sources for our idea."
- "I will practice explaining our solution clearly."
- "I will think about who we need to talk to in order to make this happen."



| Lesson 30: Presentation Skills Workshop

Objective:

- Equip students with public speaking skills to confidently present their Youth Empowerment Action Plan.
- Build students' confidence in delivering persuasive and engaging presentations.
- Incorporate a fun movement-based activity to reduce anxiety and improve vocal delivery.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"You've developed powerful ideas for change. Now, it's time to make sure your voices are heard. Today, we'll focus on public speaking strategies to help you present with confidence and impact."*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"The way we deliver our message is just as important as the message itself—let's make sure we're ready to speak with clarity and confidence."*

2. Icebreaker: "Power Poses & Vocal Warm-Ups" (10 min)

- Activity:
 - Power Pose Challenge:
 - Students stand in a circle and strike a "power pose" (e.g., standing tall with arms on hips like a superhero).
 - They hold the pose for 30 seconds and take deep breaths to build confidence.
 - Vocal Warm-Up Relay:
 - Students form a line. The first student says a word in a strong, clear voice, then passes it to the next student who must say it louder and with more energy.
 - Continue until the last student, who shouts it with confidence!
 - Debrief Discussion:
 - *"How did it feel to take up space and use your voice?"*
 - *"What role does body language play in strong public speaking?"*

3. Public Speaking Basics (10 min)

- Framing Question: *What makes a strong public speaker?*
- Facilitator presents key tips:
 1. Posture & Presence: Stand tall, take up space.
 2. Eye Contact: Connect with the audience.



3. Vocal Strength: Speak clearly and project your voice.
 4. Pacing & Pauses: Don't rush—use pauses for emphasis.
 5. Expression & Energy: Use emotion to engage listeners.
- Mini-Exercise:
 - "Say It with Impact" – Each student reads a simple phrase (e.g., "Our voices matter!")
 - They repeat it with different styles: loud, slow, dramatic, excited.
 - Debrief: "How did changing delivery affect how the message was received?"

4. Small Group Practice: Delivering Key Points (20 min)

- Activity Steps:
 1. Divide into small groups.
 2. Each student practices delivering one key point from the action plan.
 3. Group members give feedback using the "Glow & Grow" method:
 - Glow: What they did well.
 - Grow: One way to improve.
- Whole Group Reflection:
 - "What felt easier than expected?"
 - "What is one thing you want to work on before presenting?"

5. Expression Exercise: "Lightning Round Speeches" (15 min)

- Framing Statement: "Real-life presentations don't always go as planned. This challenge will help you think on your feet!"
- Activity:
 - Each student draws a random scenario (e.g., "The microphone stops working" or "A tough question is asked").
 - They deliver a 30-second speech on a key point while handling the scenario.
 - Debrief:
 - "What did you learn about thinking on your feet?"
 - "How can we stay calm and confident under pressure?"

6. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

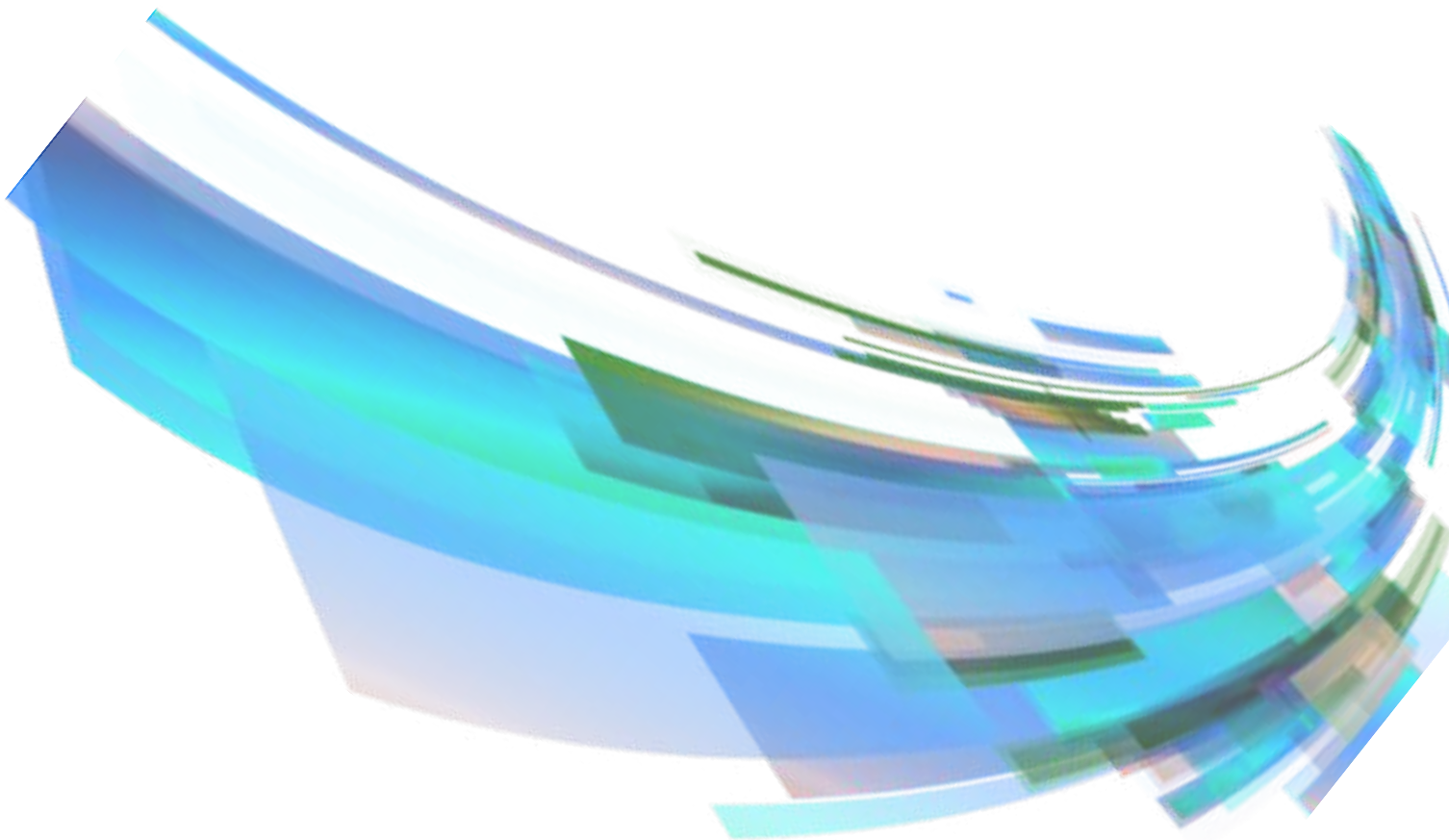
- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one thing you will remember about public speaking?
 2. How does confidence affect how people receive our message?
 3. What is one strategy you will use in our final presentation?
- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"Public speaking takes practice, but you are ready. Next, we'll do a full run-through of our action plan presentation!"



7. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one specific way they will prepare before the final presentation.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will practice my speech in front of a mirror."*
 - *"I will slow down and use pauses when I speak."*
 - *"I will make eye contact and use confident body language."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"Your voice is your power. Use it boldly, and make sure your message is heard."*





| Lesson 31: Lesson Title: “Blueprint for Change: Building Our Action Plan”

Objective:

Students will design a districtwide youth empowerment action plan by identifying key issues, setting measurable goals, and mapping roles. They will use data-driven thinking and team collaboration to create a plan of action relevant to their schools and communities.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator Message:

“Today, we’re taking our vision for youth empowerment and turning it into a powerful action plan. Your ideas will help shape what empowerment *looks like* across schools and neighborhoods – with metrics to prove the impact!”

2. Icebreaker – “Empower-Move!” Game (5 min)

Instructions:

Facilitator calls out a youth issue (e.g., “students need more mental health support”).

Students respond physically:

- Jump = I’ve experienced this
- Spin = I’ve seen someone go through it
- Step forward = I want to fix this

Quick debrief:

“What issues moved us the most? What does that tell us about what matters here?”

3. Exploratory Exercise – “Empowerment Planning Carousel” (25 min)

Set-Up:

Post 5 large flip-chart sheets around the room with these headings:

1. Key Issue(s) to Address
2. Why It Matters (Local Impact)
3. What Youth Need to Thrive
4. Possible Solutions & Partners
5. How We Will Measure Success

Instructions:

- Students rotate in small groups through each station, adding sticky notes or drawing on posters.
- Every 4 minutes, they rotate to the next station.



- After the final station, they do a “Gallery Walk” and silently add stickers or \checks to the 2 most powerful ideas per sheet.

4. Expression Exercise – “From Vision to Blueprint” (20 min)

Instructions:

In teams or pairs, students take the *top-voted ideas* and fill in a Districtwide Action Plan Grid like this:

Element	Our Plan
Issue We’re Addressing	
Our Empowerment Goal	
Action Steps	
Youth + Adult Partners	
Outcome Metrics (How we’ll measure success)	

Encourage visuals, color, slogans, or a logo to brand their plan.

5. Review (5 min)

Facilitator prompts:

- “What’s one goal from your plan you’re proud of?”
- “What makes a good outcome metric?”
- “What makes your plan different from an adult-led plan?”

6. Reflection (5 min)

Prompt:

What’s one thing YOU can do this month to bring this action plan to life in your school or neighborhood?

Students write on exit tickets and post them on a “Districtwide Change Wall.”



| Lesson 32: Final Action Plan Revisions

Objective:

- Finalize the Youth Empowerment Action Plan by refining each section.
- Ensure the plan is clear, actionable, and persuasive.
- Use an engaging movement-based activity to review and strengthen the final plan.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator's Message:

"We're in the final stage of preparing our Youth Empowerment Action Plan! Today, we'll make final revisions to ensure our ideas are clear, realistic, and ready to present."

Reinforce the End Goal:

"A well-organized and polished action plan will give us the best chance of convincing decision-makers to support our solutions."

2. Icebreaker: "Find the Flaws" (10 min – Movement Game)

Activity:

- The facilitator posts sections of the action plan on large chart paper around the room (Problem, Solution, Steps, Support, Resources).
- Students walk around the room with sticky notes and add comments under two categories:
 - "Strong Points" – What is already strong about this section?
 - "Needs Improvement" – What is missing or unclear?
- After 5 minutes, students rotate to another section and review what the previous group wrote, adding their own feedback.

Debrief Discussion:

- Which sections received the most "Needs Improvement" notes?
- What common areas still need strengthening?
- How can we ensure each section is polished and persuasive?

Key Takeaway:

"Small refinements make a big difference! The better our action plan, the more likely it is to succeed."



3. Small Groups Finalize Action Plan Sections (20 min – Group Work)

Framing Question:

How do we refine our sections to make them clear and persuasive?

Activity Steps:

1. Revising Based on Feedback (10 min)

- Students return to their original small groups and review the feedback left on their section during the Icebreaker.
- Groups rewrite or adjust their section based on peer suggestions.

2. Strengthening with Persuasive Language (10 min)

- Facilitator challenges each group to make their section stronger by:
 - Making sure the problem is urgent and clear.
 - Ensuring the solution sounds realistic.
 - Adding specific details on who can help and what resources are needed.

Whole Group Discussion:

- What's one major improvement your group made?
- How does the plan feel different now compared to earlier versions?

4. The "Plan Pitch Relay" (20 min – Fun Movement & Speaking Game)

Framing Statement:

"Now, let's practice presenting our plan! Each group will pitch their section quickly in a fun relay challenge."

Activity Steps:

1. Relay Setup (5 min – Teams Prepare Their Pitches)

- Each group gets 1 minute to prepare a quick, persuasive pitch of their section.
- The goal is to convince the "decision-makers" (the rest of the class) that their section is strong.

2. The Relay Game (10 min – Movement & Public Speaking)

- Each group lines up in a relay-style format.
- The first group presents their section in 30 seconds or less.
- As soon as they finish, the next group rushes to the front and presents their section.
- This continues until all sections have been presented.

3. Feedback & Voting (5 min – Movement Activity)

- After all groups present, students vote with their feet:
 - "This section is ready!" → Move to the right side of the room.
 - "Needs one more round of editing." → Move to the left side.
- Facilitator asks students to explain their reasoning.



Whole Group Reflection:

- Which sections are the strongest?
- What's one last tweak we need to make?

5. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

Facilitator prompts:

- What is one thing that improved in our plan today?
- How does refining our work help us create real change?
- What's one final step we need to take before presenting?

Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:

"In the next lesson, we'll do a full run-through of our final presentation—so let's bring our best energy!"

6. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

Activity:

Each student writes down or shares one final improvement they will make to their section.

Examples:

- "I will add more details to make the steps clearer."
- "I will make our solution sound more realistic."
- "I will practice saying my section out loud so I'm ready to present."

Closing Message:

"Strong solutions come from strong preparation. Our action plan is almost ready—let's get ready to present it with confidence!"





| Lesson 33: Mock Presentation & Feedback

Objective:

- Give students a full practice run of their Youth Empowerment Action Plan presentation.
- Strengthen students' confidence and public speaking skills through peer feedback.
- Make practice fun and engaging with movement-based activities.

1. Welcome (1 min)

- Facilitator's Message:
 - *"We're almost at the finish line! Today, we'll do a full run-through of our presentation with peer feedback. This is your chance to refine your speaking skills before the big day!"*
 - Reinforce the end goal: *"A strong delivery makes all the difference—let's make sure we're clear, confident, and compelling."*

2. Icebreaker: "Power Walk & Pose" (10 min)

- Activity:
 - Students walk around the room as if they're entering the stage to present.
 - When the facilitator says, *"Freeze!"*, students strike a confident pose (e.g., hands on hips, standing tall, arms crossed).
 - Variation: The facilitator calls out different emotions (*"Excited!" "Nervous!" "Determined!"*) and students adjust their body language accordingly.
 - Debrief Discussion:
 - *"How does body language affect how others see us?"*
 - *"What poses or gestures make us feel the most confident?"*
 - Key takeaway: *"Your presence matters—own your space when presenting."*

3. Full Mock Presentation – First Round (20 min)

- Activity Steps:
 1. Set Up Presentation Roles
 - Students take their assigned roles (speakers, transitions, visuals, Q&A team).
 2. First Full Run-Through



- Students deliver their full presentation as if they were presenting to DOE leadership.
 - Peers act as the audience, taking notes on what works well and what needs improvement.
3. Quick Peer Feedback Using "Glow & Grow"
- Glow: One thing they did well.
 - Grow: One area to improve.

4. Fun Peer Critique Activity: "Speed Feedback" (15 min)

- Activity:
 - Setup:
 - Students stand in two lines facing each other (like speed dating).
 - One line presents a 30-second key point from their speech to the person across from them.
 - The listener provides quick feedback ("*Your voice was strong!*" or "*Try slowing down a little.*").
 - Rotate!
 - After 30 seconds, students rotate to the next person and repeat the process.
 - Debrief Discussion:
 - "*What was the best piece of feedback you received?*"
 - "*What small changes will make the biggest difference?*"

5. Full Mock Presentation – Second Round (10 min)

- Activity Steps:
 1. Incorporate Feedback:
 - Students make quick adjustments based on peer suggestions.
 2. Second Full Run-Through:
 - Students present again with improvements.
 3. Final Whole Group Reflection:
 - Facilitator asks:
 - "*What felt different between the first and second run-through?*"
 - "*How did feedback help improve your confidence?*"

6. Review: "Key Takeaways" (5 min)

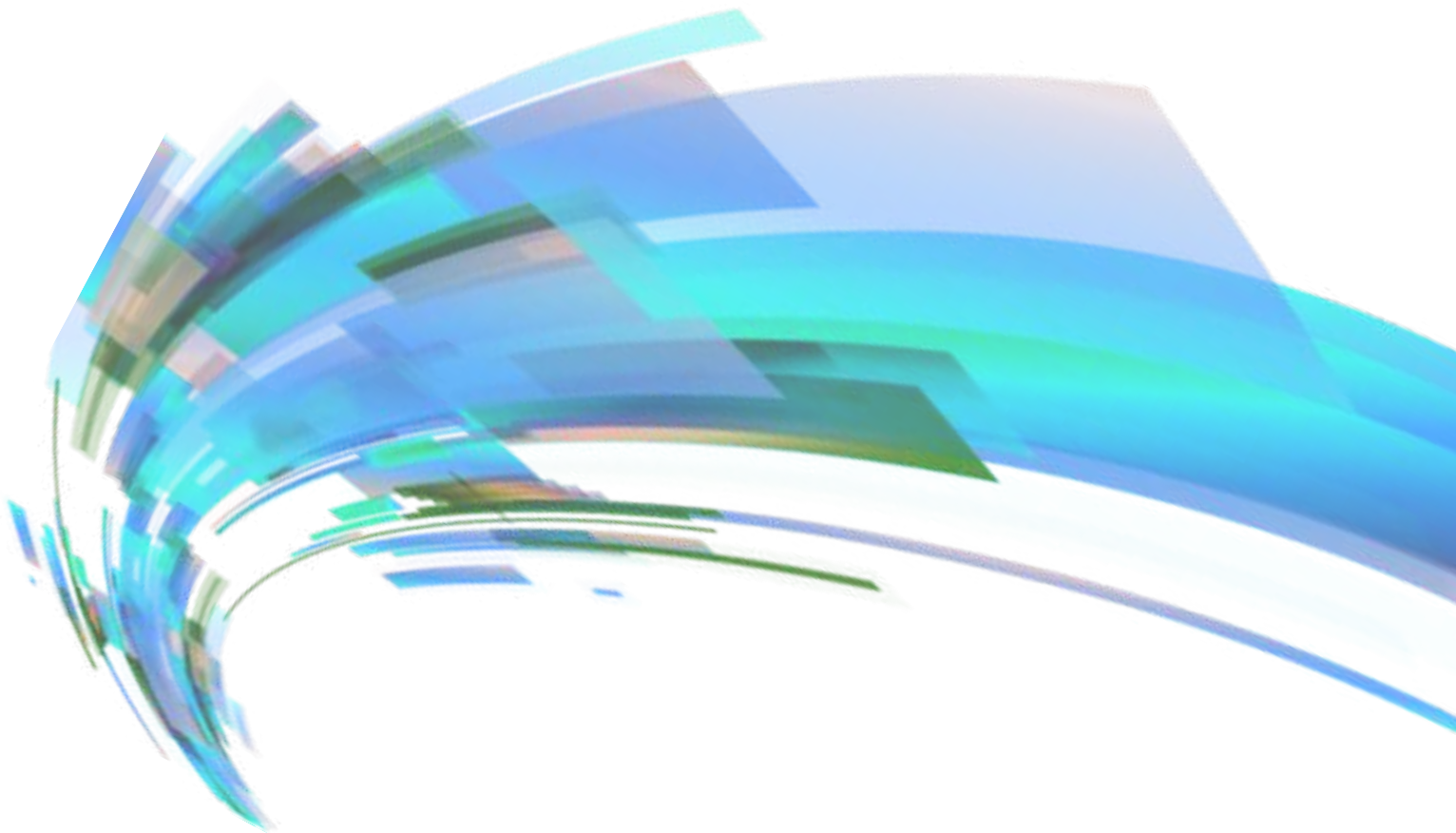
- Facilitator prompts:
 1. What is one major improvement you made today?
 2. How does practice affect confidence?
 3. What is one final thing you will work on before the actual presentation?



- Facilitator connects responses to the journey ahead:
"You are ready. The hard work is paying off—next up is the real deal!"

7. Reflection: "One Step Forward" (5 min)

- Activity:
 - Each student writes down or shares one thing they will do before the final presentation.
 - Examples:
 - *"I will practice my transitions with my team."*
 - *"I will record myself speaking and watch for areas to improve."*
 - *"I will work on eye contact when I speak."*
- Closing Message:
 - *"You've got this! Walk in with confidence, speak with power, and show them why student voices matter."*





| Lesson 34: “Delivering the Pitch – Own the Room”

Objective:

Support students in confidently presenting their pitch to diverse audiences and adapting based on feedback.

1. Welcome (1 min)

Facilitator’s Message:

“You’ve built a powerful pitch. Now it’s time to bring it to life. Today we’ll focus on delivery—how to speak clearly, connect with your audience, and respond to questions like a pro.”

2. Icebreaker: “Elevator Ride Challenge” (5 min)

Activity:

In pairs, students take turns giving a 30-second version of their pitch—as if they’re riding an elevator with the Chancellor or Mayor.

Facilitator prompt: “Can you capture your idea before the doors open?”

3. Exploratory Exercise: “Pitch Delivery Boot Camp” (20 min)

Mini-Workshops: Break the class into 3 rotating stations focused on:

- Voice & Body Language – Practice speaking clearly, making eye contact, and using purposeful gestures.
- Connecting with the Audience – Practice starting with a hook, storytelling, or a bold stat.
- Handling Q&A – Anticipate tough questions and practice answering them with confidence.

4. Expression Exercise: “Final Pitch Round + Feedback” (20 min)

Activity:

Each group presents their refined pitch to the class (or invited guests) in 2–3 minutes.

Peers or guests provide feedback using:

- Glow: What worked well?
- Grow: What could be improved?

5. Review: “Pitching Like a Pro” (5 min)

Facilitator asks:

- What did you learn from watching others pitch?
- What made the strongest pitches stand out?



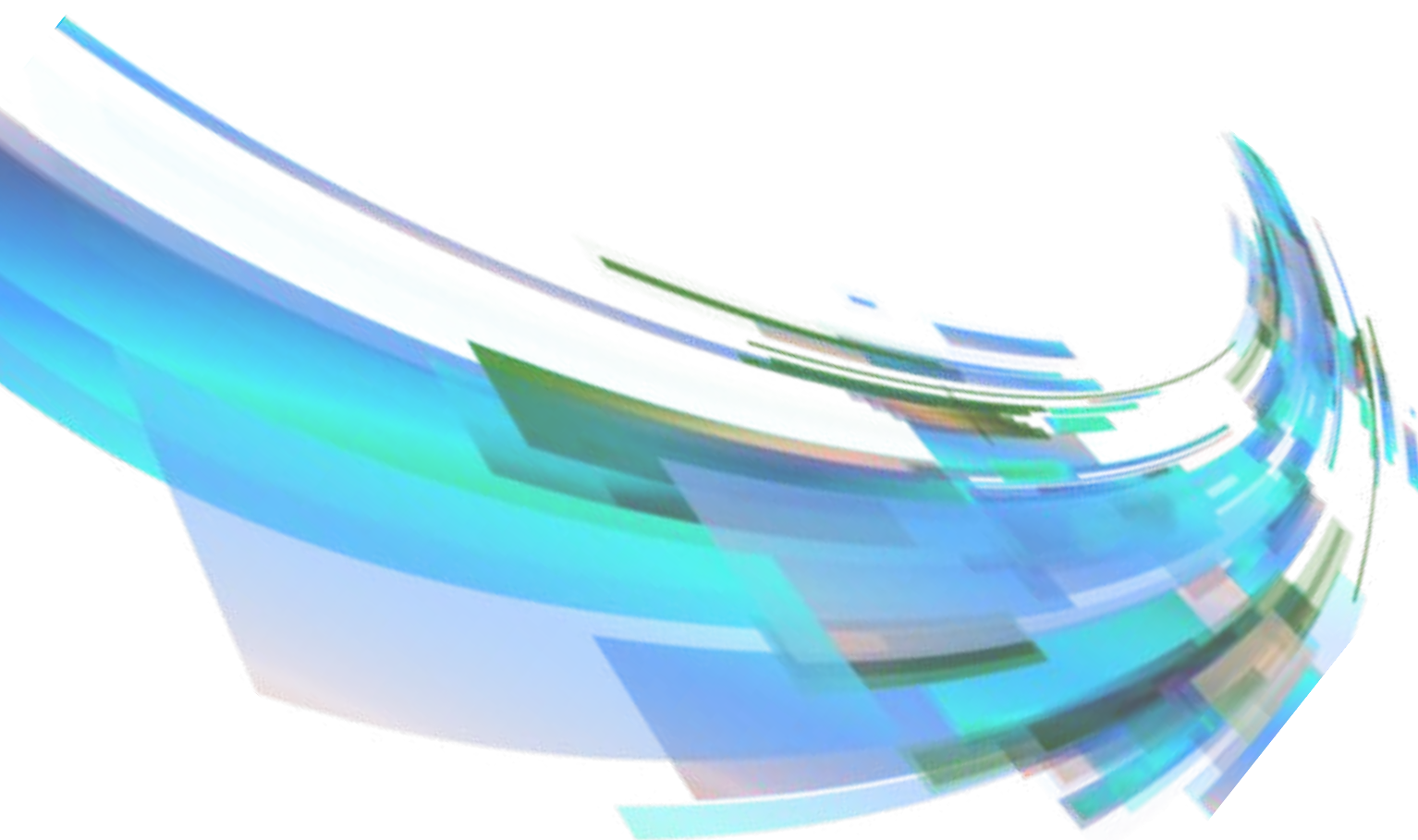
6. Reflection: "What's Next?" (5 min)

Prompt:

Write or share:

"One thing I'll do to take our pitch beyond the classroom is..."

(e.g., "Send it to the principal," "Record a video for the school website," "Share it at youth council.")





| Lesson 35: The Final Reflection & Next Steps

Objective:

- Reflect on personal and group growth throughout the 28-lesson journey.
- Provide feedback on what worked, what could be improved, and what students would like to see in the future.
- Celebrate progress and build momentum for continued advocacy efforts.
- Make the session fun, engaging, and meaningful—instilling pride in students.

1. Welcome & Energy Boost (5 min – Fun Movement Activity)

Facilitator's Message:

"We've spent 28 lessons building knowledge, developing solutions, and pushing for change. Today, we look back on how far we've come, celebrate our progress, and talk about how we'll keep the momentum going!"

Activity: "Victory Walk" (Movement & Pride-Building)

- Students line up and walk across the room one by one as the group cheers for them.
- As they walk, they say one thing they are proud of from this experience (e.g., "I'm proud that I spoke up in class," "I learned how to advocate for my needs," "I helped create real solutions for my school.>").
- Optional: Play motivational background music while they do this!

Key Takeaway:

"Every step you've taken has helped build this movement. You deserve to be celebrated!"

2. Personal Growth Reflection (15 min – Interactive Feedback & Sharing)

Framing Question:

How have we grown as individuals and as a group over these 28 lessons?

Activity: "Before & After" (Self-Reflection & Small Group Discussion)

- Give students two reflection prompts:
 1. "Before this program, I used to think _____. Now, I believe _____."
 2. "One skill I've improved in is _____."
- Students write down their responses and then pair up to share.
- After 2 minutes, pairs switch partners and share again (repeat 2-3 times).
- Whole Group Discussion:
 - What were common themes in people's answers?
 - How have we changed as a group?



Key Takeaway:

"Growth happens step by step. You are leaving this experience stronger and more empowered than when you started."

3. Program Feedback: What Worked, What Didn't? (15 min – Movement & Interactive Game)

Activity: "Three Corners Feedback" (What Went Well, What Could Improve, Suggestions for the Future)

- Three corners of the room are labeled:
 - "What Went Well"
 - "What Could Improve"
 - "Suggestions for the Future"
- Students walk to the corner that they feel most drawn to and write feedback on sticky notes or whiteboards.
- After 5 minutes, the facilitator reads a few responses from each category aloud and discusses:
 - What worked best in this program?
 - What could be better?
 - What topics/activities should be included if this program continues?

Key Takeaway:

"Your voices don't just matter in advocacy—they matter in shaping learning experiences. Your feedback will help make future programs stronger!"

4. Looking Ahead: Continuing Advocacy Efforts (15 min – Fun & Actionable Discussion)

Framing Statement:

"This journey doesn't end today! Real empowerment means keeping the momentum going."

Activity: "Power Moves" (Interactive Advocacy Planning)

- Students brainstorm actions they can take next in three categories:
 1. Personal Growth: What's one thing I'll continue practicing (e.g., public speaking, confidence, problem-solving)?
 2. School & Community Change: What's one issue I want to keep working on?
 3. Big-Picture Advocacy: How can I keep making my voice heard (e.g., joining a student council, writing to policymakers, organizing a campaign)?
- Students write their "Power Move" on an index card or sticky note.



- Volunteers share their next steps with the class.

Whole Group Discussion:

- How can we support each other in our continued advocacy efforts?
- What's one thing we want to remind future students about their power?

Key Takeaway:

"You have the tools, the voice, and the power to keep making change happen!"

5. The Final Celebration (10 min – Recognition & Closing Messages)

Activity: "Award & Recognition Ceremony" (Fun & Pride-Building)

- The facilitator gives out lighthearted, fun awards to students based on their contributions:
 - "Most Likely to Change the World"
 - "Most Fearless Speaker"
 - "Creative Problem-Solver"
 - "Team Motivator"
 - "Future CEO"
- Students take a moment to celebrate each other and cheer for the group's accomplishments.
- Group Picture (if possible) to capture the moment!

Final Message:

"You didn't just complete a program—you became leaders. Keep pushing for change, supporting each other, and using your voice. This is just the beginning!"

6. Reflection: "One Last Step Forward" (Final Thoughts & Goodbyes – 5 min)

Activity: "Letter to My Future Self"

- Students write a letter to themselves about:
 - What they've learned.
 - Their hopes for their future advocacy efforts.
 - A message of encouragement for themselves.
- The facilitator collects the letters and promises to return them in a few months as a reminder of their growth!



APPENDIX I: PHASE WORKSHEETS



Phase 1: Identity, Interests & Assets Worksheet – Voices in the Mirror

Provide students with any combination of these supplemental activities to do.

Activity 1: Me Through My Eyes

List 3 words you use to describe yourself:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Activity 2: Me Through Others' Eyes

Write 3 compliments or affirmations you've received from others:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Activity 3: Who I Want to Be

Write 2 words you want to be known for in the future:

1. _____
2. _____

Activity 4: I Am... Statement

Write your own 'I Am' affirmation:

I am _____

Activity 5: Life Line Sketch

Draw a simple timeline of your life, marking 3 important events that shaped who you are.

Activity 6: Strengths Collage

Write or sketch five words, images, or symbols that represent your strengths.

Activity 7: Story Starter

Complete the sentence: A time I felt proud of myself was when...



Phase 2: Problem Statement Worksheet – If I Were Principal

Provide students with any combination of these supplemental activities to do.

Activity 1: What Would You Change?

If I were principal, one school rule I would change is:

Activity 2: My 3-Point Empowerment Plan

1. A change to empower youth:

2. A new support for students in temporary housing:

3. A leadership opportunity I would create:

Activity 3: Dream School Blueprint

Draw or describe your dream school on a blank sheet of paper.

Activity 4: School Walk-Through

List 3 things you've noticed in your school that don't work well for students in temporary housing.

Activity 5: "Why?" Chain

Pick one issue and ask yourself 'why' five times to explore the root of the problem.

Activity 6: Speak Your Truth

Write a short speech about one school change you would make if you had the power.



Phase 3: Causes of the Issue Worksheet – Tracing It Back

Provide students with any combination of these supplemental activities to do.

Activity 1: Unpacking the Problem

Write down one major challenge you've seen in your school:

Activity 2: What's Behind It?

What are 3 possible causes of this problem?

1. -----

2. -----

3. -----

Activity 3: Bigger Picture

How does this problem connect to other issues in your school or community?

Activity 4: This is Bigger Than Me

Write a short reflection:

I used to think this was just about me, but now I see...

Activity 5: Root Cause Detective

Pick one issue and brainstorm 3 reasons why it exists.

Activity 6: System Snapshot

Draw or describe one system (school, city, etc.) that contributes to this issue.

Activity 7: Perspective Shift

Write how a school principal or policymaker might explain the same issue.



Phase 4: Effects of the Issue Worksheet – Ripple Effects

Provide students with any combination of these supplemental activities to do.

Activity 1: The Issue

Choose one issue and write it in the center below.

[Draw a ripple map with the issue in the center]

Activity 2: The Effects

List at least 3 effects this issue has:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Activity 3: Skit Reflection

What emotions or experiences came up in your skit?

Activity 4: Domino Effect Drawing

Draw a row of falling dominos. Label each with a consequence of one key issue.

Activity 5: Student Journal

Write from the point of view of a student deeply affected by the issue. How does their day unfold?

Activity 6: Big vs. Small Impact

List short-term and long-term effects this issue has on students.



Phase 5: Interventions to the Issue Worksheet – Imagine If

Provide students with any combination of these supplemental activities to do.

Activity 1: Big Visions!

Complete the sentence: Imagine if every student had...

Activity 2: Your Intervention

Describe or draw your big idea for change:

- Name:
- Slogan:
- What it does:

Activity 3: Making It Real

What would you need to make this happen?

(People, places, funding, support)

Activity 4: Fix-It Flowchart

Draw a flowchart showing steps to fix one problem your class identified.

Activity 5: Change Starter Kit

List 5 people or resources you would need to help you implement a solution.

Activity 6: Social Media Campaign

Create a slogan and hashtag for your solution. What's your message?



Phase 6: Action Worksheet – Planning Our Pitch

Provide students with any combination of these supplemental activities to do.

Activity 1: 3-Word Summary

Describe your project in 3 words:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Activity 2: Pitch Plan

Fill in your pitch:

- The Problem: _____
- Our Solution: _____
- The Impact: _____
- Call to Action: _____

Activity 3: Peer Feedback Notes

Glow (What we did well):

Grow (How we can improve):

Activity 4: 3-2-1 Launch Plan

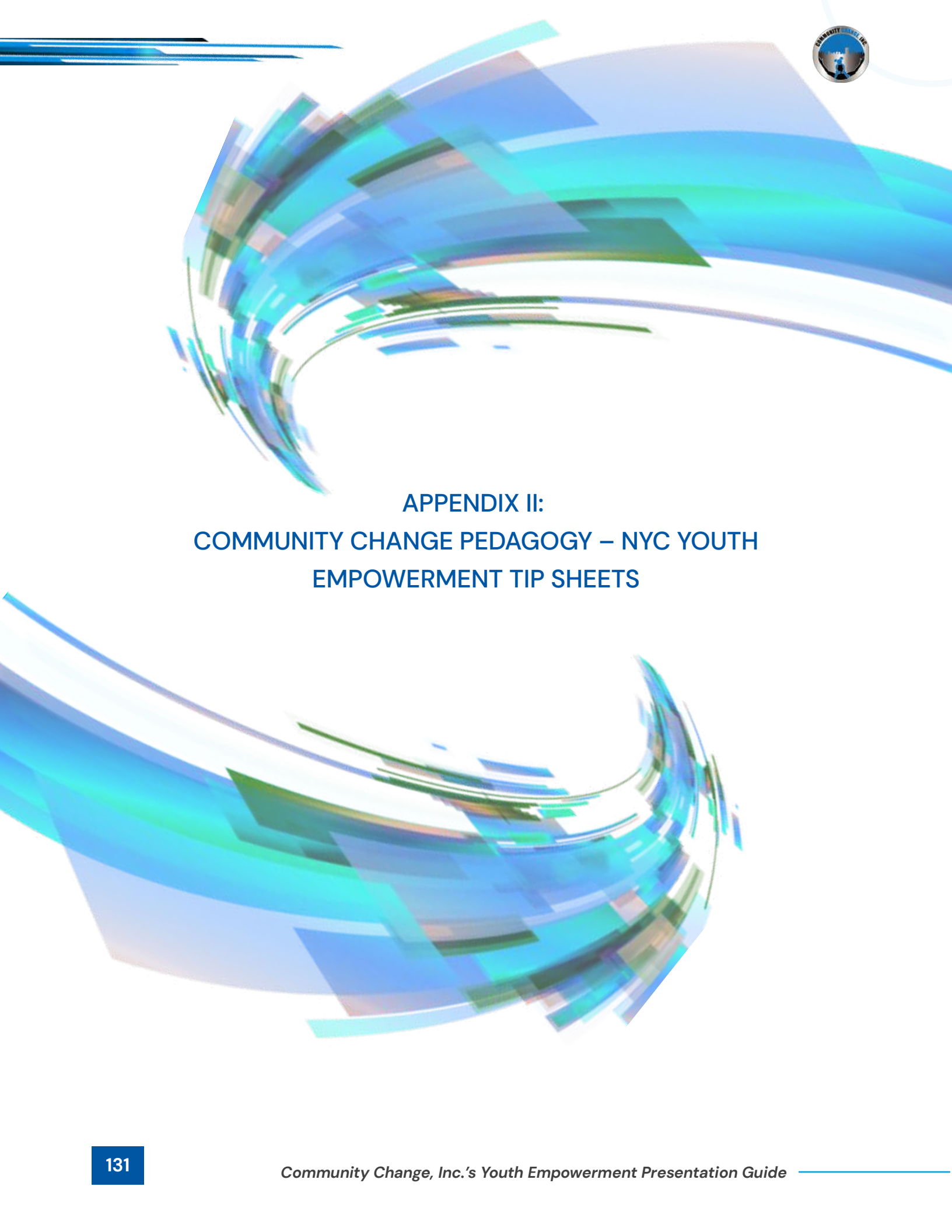
List: 3 steps to take next, 2 people you'll ask for help, 1 goal for next week.

Activity 5: Stakeholder Map

Sketch a map showing who's involved in your project—from peers to community leaders.

Activity 6: Pitch Prep

Write a 30-second pitch to share your project idea with a decision-maker.

A large, abstract graphic composed of multiple overlapping, curved bands in shades of blue, cyan, and green. The bands are layered and curved, creating a sense of depth and movement. The graphic is centered on the page and frames the title text.

APPENDIX II: COMMUNITY CHANGE PEDAGOGY – NYC YOUTH EMPOWERMENT TIP SHEETS



Phase 1: Identity, Interests & Assets Tip Sheet – Know Yourself, Grow Yourself

Key Concepts

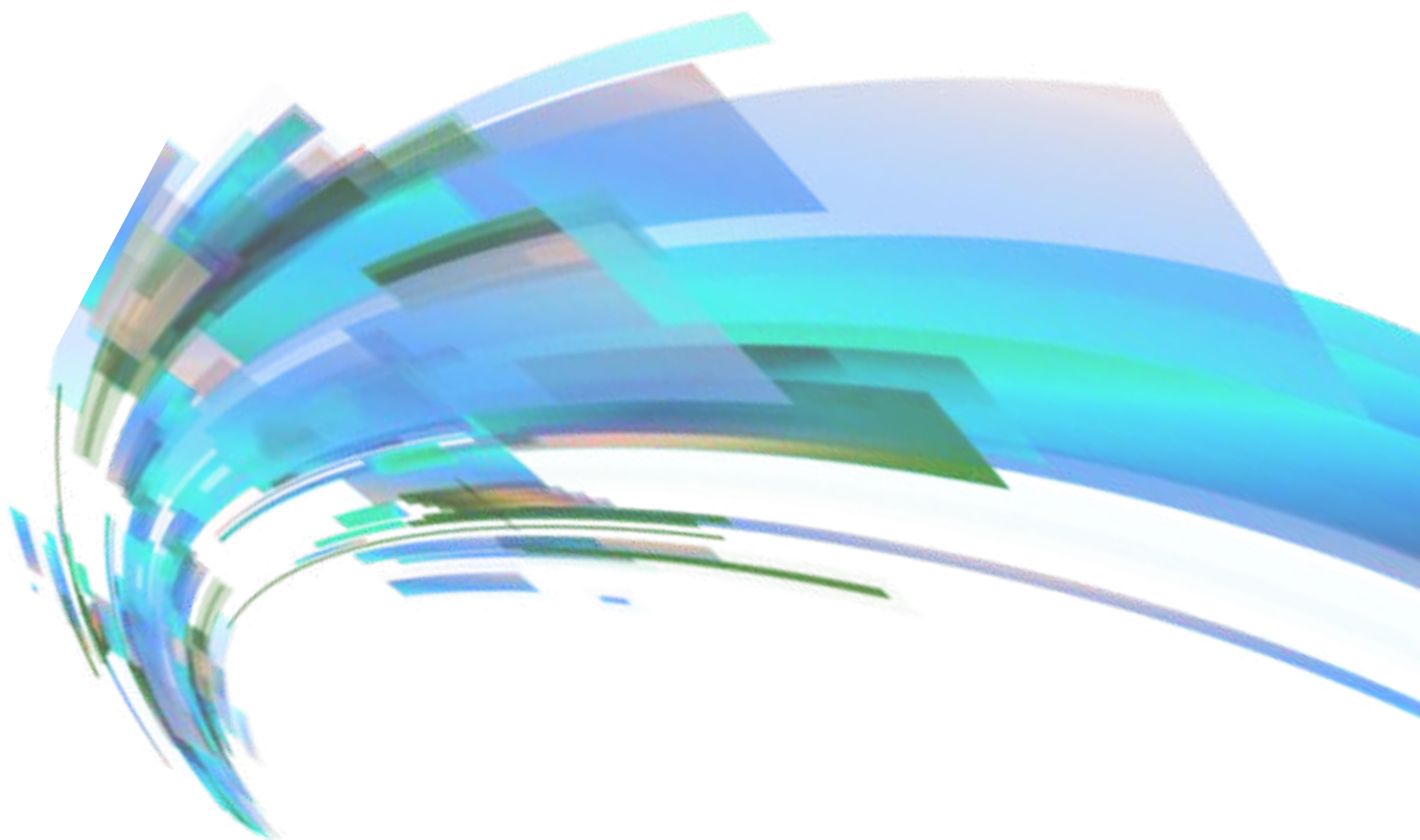
- Understanding personal identity, strengths, and passions.
- Recognizing how personal experiences shape one's worldview.
- Building confidence through self-reflection and affirmation.

NYC Resources

- The Brotherhood Sister Sol (BroSis): Offers programs in music, writing, and agriculture to help youth explore their identities and histories.

<https://www.parents.com/third-spaces-for-black-teens-8787222>

- Fresh Youth Initiatives (FYI): Empowers immigrant and first-generation youth in Northern Manhattan. <https://freshyouth.org>





Phase 2: Problem Statement Tip Sheet – Spot It to Stop It

Key Concepts

- Identifying issues affecting students and their communities.
- Understanding the importance of student voice in school governance.
- Recognizing the power of collective action.

NYC Resources

- Student Advisory Councils: Engage students as partners in school leadership.
<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/get-involved/students/student-advisory-councils>
- NYC Youth Leadership Councils (YLCs): Youth-driven policy and advocacy groups.
<https://growingupnyc.cityofnewyork.us/programs/nyc-youth-leadership-councils>



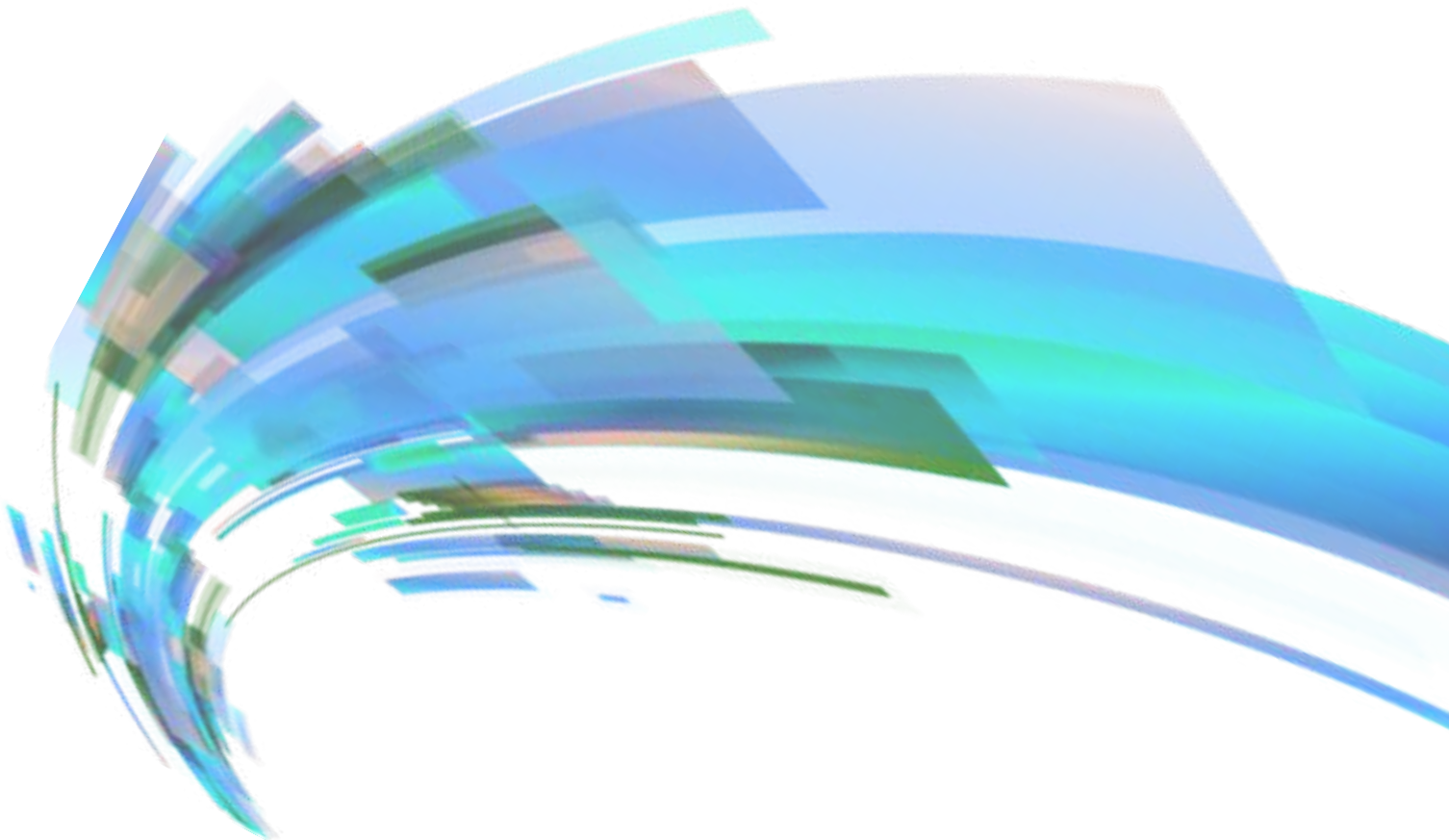
Phase 3: Causes of the Issue Tip Sheet – Dig Deeper, Understand More

Key Concepts

- Analyzing systemic and historical factors contributing to current issues.
- Understanding the role of policies and institutions in shaping experiences.
- Recognizing the interconnectedness of social issues.

NYC Resources

- Center for Justice Innovation: Supports youth safety and justice.
<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/areas-of-focus/youth-initiatives>
- Make the Road NY – Youth Power Project: Develops young leaders for justice.
<https://maketheroadny.org/program/youth-and-school-programs>





Phase 4: Effects of the Issue Tip Sheet – See the Ripple, Feel the Impact

Key Concepts

- Understanding the short-term and long-term effects of identified problems.
- Recognizing how issues affect various aspects of life.
- Empathizing with those impacted and acknowledging shared experiences.

NYC Resources

- WHEDco – Project STEP: Develops social responsibility through service learning.
<https://whedco.org/education-family-support/youth-development>
- The POINT CDC: Youth empowerment and media arts in the Bronx.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_POINT_Community_Development_Corporation





Phase 5: Interventions to the Issue Tip Sheet – Imagine Solutions, Create Change

Key Concepts

- Brainstorming and designing actionable solutions to identified problems.
- Collaborating with peers and community members to implement interventions.
- Utilizing creativity and innovation to address challenges.

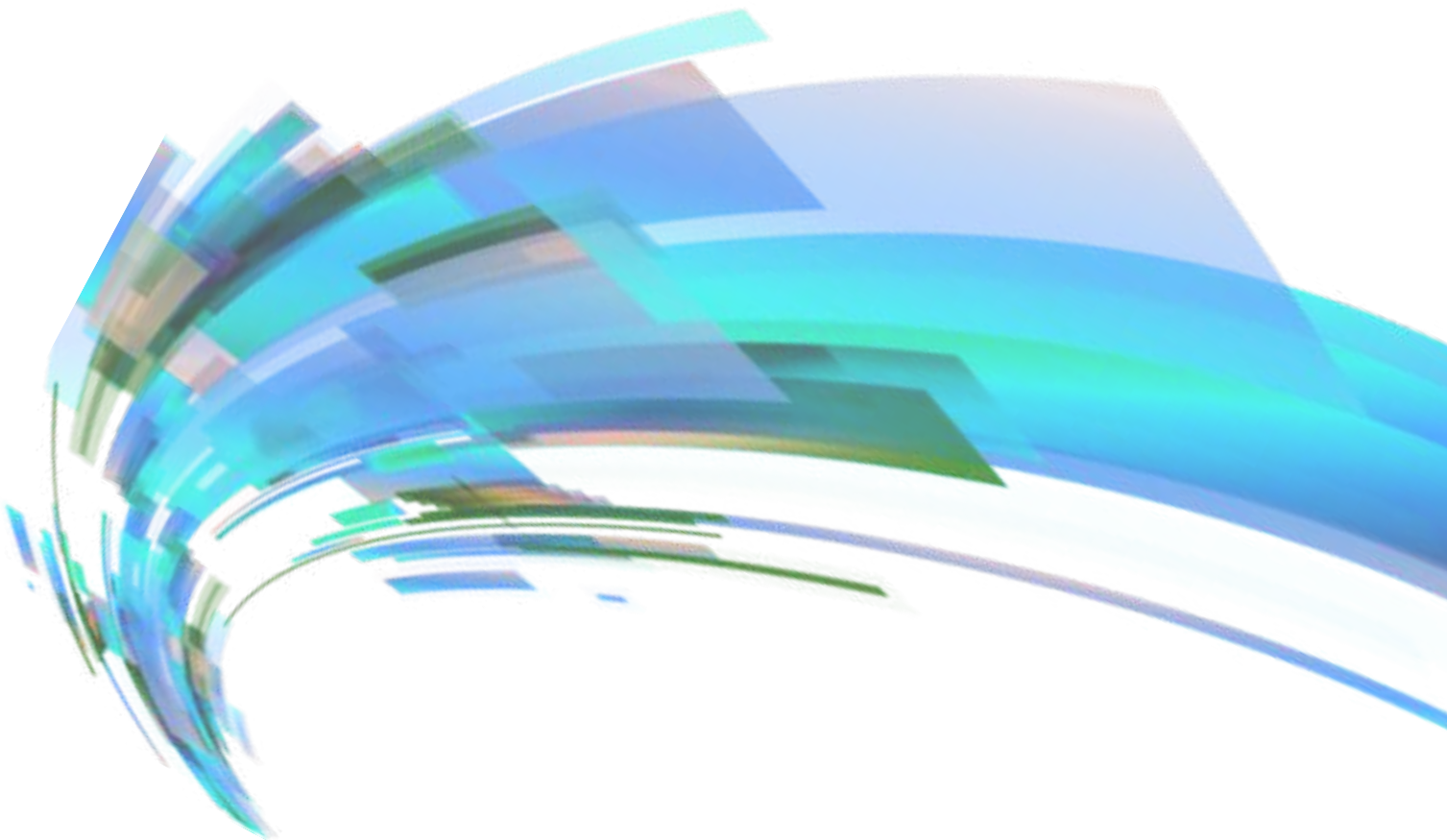
NYC Resources

- ExpandedED Schools: Enrichment partnerships with public schools.

<https://www.expandedschools.org>

- NYC GREAT!: Leadership programs for high school girls.

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/programs/nyc-great>





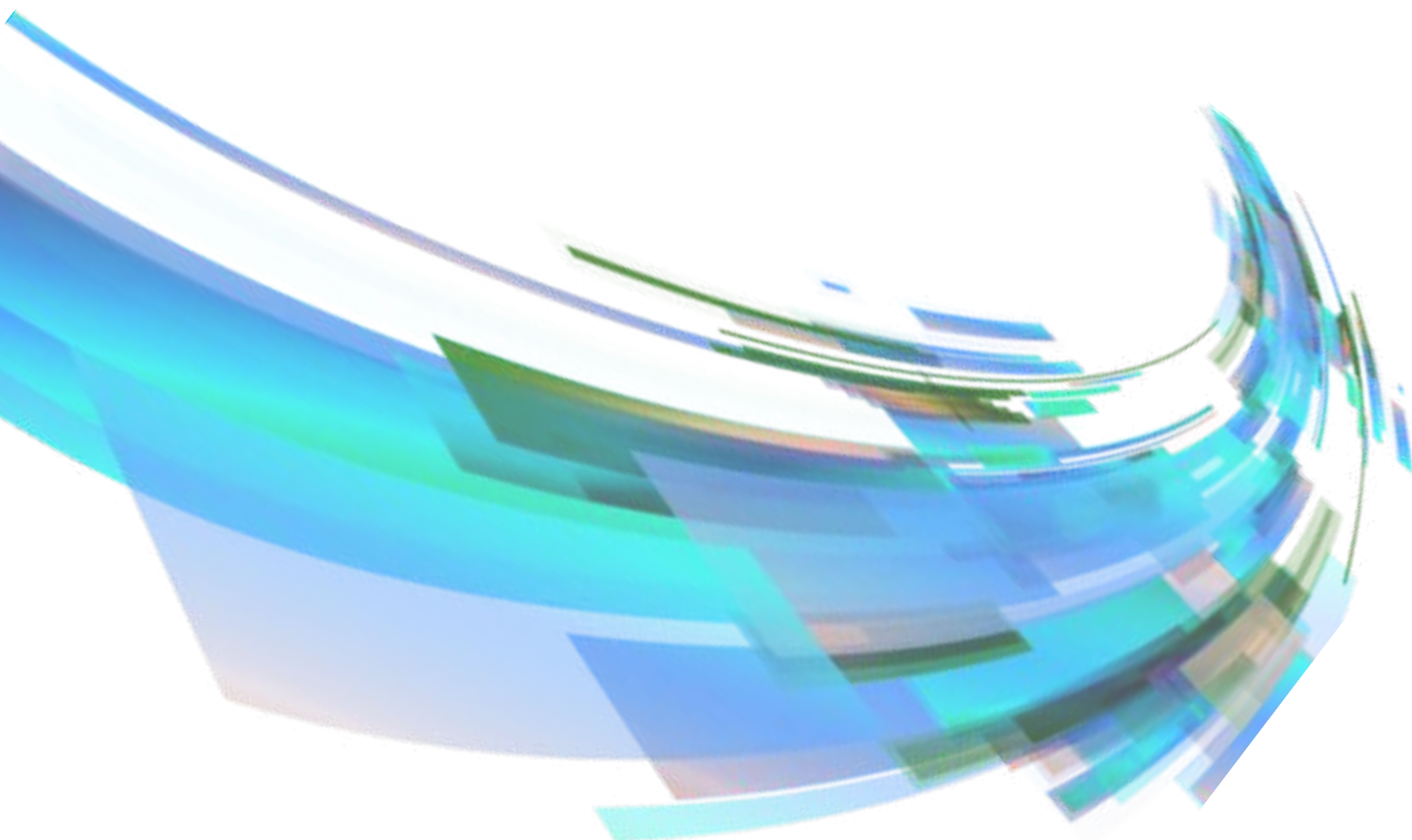
Phase 6: Action Tip Sheet – Lead the Way, Make It Happen

Key Concepts

- Implementing planned interventions to address identified problems.
- Engaging stakeholders and presenting solutions to decision-makers.
- Reflecting on the process and outcomes to inform future actions.

NYC Resources

- Service in Schools Leadership Institute: Student leadership in service learning.
<https://spep.libguides.com/leadership>
- NYC Youth Journalism Coalition: Student storytelling for policy change.
<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/nyc-youth-journalism-coalition>





APPENDIX III: YPAR METRICS & RUBRIC



SAMPLE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT METRICS

Below is a list of **sample youth empowerment metrics** that can be used to track progress as youth leaders craft their districtwide action plan. These metrics are **outcomes-based** and can be adapted for students in temporary housing, foster care, and other vulnerable populations.

1. Self-Efficacy & Voice

- % of youth who report feeling confident expressing their ideas in school settings
- % of youth who feel they can influence decisions at their school/in their community
- Number of youth-led presentations, proposals, or events shared with school or district leadership
- Pre-/post- survey scores measuring youth empowerment (e.g., using validated scales like the *Youth Empowerment Scale*)

2. Leadership Development

- % of youth taking on leadership roles in school-based or community activities
- Number of youth facilitating workshops, focus groups, or peer-mentoring sessions
- Youth participation rate in advisories, youth councils, or decision-making bodies
- Increase in leadership competencies based on self- or teacher-assessments

3. School Engagement

- % increase in school attendance among youth participants
- % increase in class participation or extracurricular involvement
- % of youth reporting stronger relationships with teachers, staff, or mentors
- Qualitative data: student testimonials, journal reflections, or video interviews describing increased connection to school



4. Goal-Setting & Future Orientation

- % of youth who set and track personal, academic, or career goals
- % of youth who complete a postsecondary plan (college, career, vocational training)
- % of youth who apply to at least one opportunity (college, job, program, etc.)
- % of youth who report having a mentor or trusted adult supporting their goals

5. Systems Impact & Accountability

- Number of district or school policies influenced or revised based on youth input
- Number of adults/staff trained in youth empowerment practices
- Youth satisfaction with adult responsiveness (via focus groups or feedback forms)
- Number of implementation steps from the youth action plan completed by school

SAMPLE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT RUBRIC

Purpose: To assess the level of youth empowerment in a school, district, or program setting based on observable behaviors, youth feedback, and adult collaboration. Use during program midpoints, post-session reflection, or quarterly reviews. This rubric can be completed by youth self-assessment, staff rating, or facilitator observation.

Domain	4 – Exemplary	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Emerging
Youth Voice & Self-Efficacy	Youth consistently advocate for change and lead conversations with adults. They demonstrate confidence in public forums and decision-making.	Youth share opinions regularly and participate in decision-making opportunities. They demonstrate confidence with some support.	Youth occasionally voice their views but lack confidence or consistent participation. Opportunities are limited or adult-led.	Youth rarely participate or feel their voices matter. Opportunities for input are minimal or tokenistic.
Leadership & Civic Engagement	Youth lead school or community initiatives, mentor peers, and hold	Youth participate in leadership activities and	Youth show interest in leadership but lack formal roles	Youth are not engaged in leadership roles or civic



	formal leadership roles. Leadership training is ongoing.	take initiative in group projects. Leadership roles are emerging.	or support. Limited engagement in broader community.	activities. No structures in place to support this.
School Engagement & Relationships	Youth report strong, trusting relationships with adults and peers. Attendance, engagement, and morale are high.	Youth feel connected to adults and peers. Engagement is consistent, and attendance is improving.	Youth feel inconsistent support from staff. Engagement is sporadic and tied to specific events or staff.	Youth feel isolated or misunderstood. Engagement is low and attendance is a concern.
Goal-Setting & Future Planning	Youth have clear, personalized academic/career goals with action steps. Postsecondary planning is student-led.	Youth are setting and tracking goals with support. College and career readiness activities are present.	Youth are exploring goals but need structure or encouragement. Planning is adult-directed.	Youth lack clear goals or support for future planning. No career or college readiness systems in place.
Systems Impact & Youth-Adult Partnerships	Youth input leads to measurable policy or program changes. Adults seek and act on youth recommendations consistently.	Youth input is valued, and adults follow up on suggestions. Co-creation of programs or events occurs occasionally.	Youth feedback is collected but not always used. Adults are gatekeepers rather than partners.	No formal channels for youth input. Decisions are made without student involvement.



Community Change, Inc.'s clients include:

Arts Westchester
Children of Promise
Claremont Neighborhood Centers
Community Word Project
Concrete Safaris
Development Without Limits
Digital Age Learning
Ellenville Central School District
Fallsburg Central School District
Global Writes
Good Shepherd Services
Greater Ridgewood Youth Council
Hunter School of Social Work
Kingston City School District
Lehman College
Lehman College Arts Gallery
Monticello School District
Middle School 80
Mt. Vernon Youth Bureau
Nepperhan Community Centers
New Rochelle Youth Bureau
New York City Administration for
Children's Services (ACS)

NYC Department of Education -
McKinney Vento Initiative
NYC Department of Education
New York State Office of
Children & Family Services
New York City Department of
Cultural Affairs
New York City Department of
Youth & Community Development
NYS Department of Education
New Yorkers for Children
Pace University
Phipps Neighborhoods
Purchase College - State University
of New York
Salvadori Centers
Steer for Student Athletes
The DreamYard Project
Ulster County Youth Bureau
Westchester County Youth Bureau
White Plains Youth Bureau
Yonkers Public Schools District

For more information
feel free to contact us at:

Community Change, Inc.

2549 Jerome Avenue #157

Bronx, NY 10468

Phone: 917.674.8269

Fax: 888.389.6063

www.communitychangeinc.com



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@CCICVNY