

## Using Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) Insights to Transform School Policies & Practices

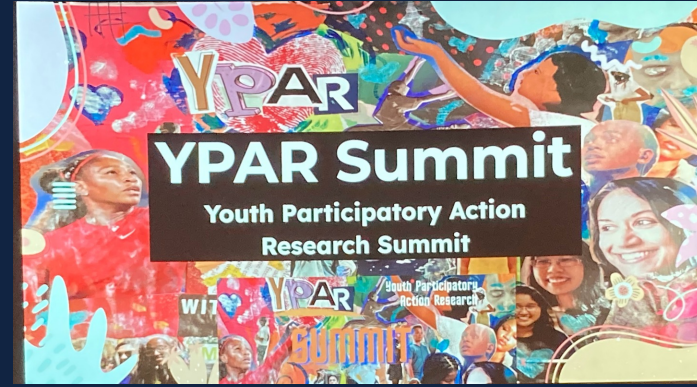
Anita Chikkatur, Carleton College  
Brooklyn Center Community Schools  
Faribault Public Schools  
Rochester Public School  
St. Anthony-New Brighton Independent School District  
St. Louis Park Public Schools  
YoUthROC

### Background

This Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) study investigates how youth can generate changes in their schools, districts, and communities. The study uses YPAR to not only encourage young people to see themselves as civic actors, but also to explore how to translate youth research findings into change. Specifically, the study explores whether youth and supportive adults can push for change by connecting insights from youth research to professional development for educators and by including youth in decision-making structures in schools.

### Research design and data

A key principle of YPAR studies is that they are context specific. As each partner designs their YPAR study, they use data and methods tailored to the research needs and interests of their youth researchers. Methods may include observation, open forums or discussions, surveys, literature reviews, and primary and secondary data analysis.



This research can provide insights and lessons on how to **center youth in community decision-making** and identify best practices for **strengthening relationships between youth and adults** within schools and communities. Because each site is implementing YPAR in different ways (after school program, summer internship, incorporating into an existing all-grade capstone course), the project can provide schools and communities **with a range of ways to incorporate participatory methods** and to ensure youth research and insights are taken seriously by adults in schools and communities.

**For more information, contact [apchikka@carleton.edu](mailto:apchikka@carleton.edu)**

**Scan to download to view webpage with grant project details and to access materials about participatory action research (PAR) in English, Spanish, and Somali**



### Research Questions

- What structures, policies, and practices in each site encourage students to participate in YPAR/youth-led initiatives? How successfully do these sites engage students who are the least engaged with traditional/existing school structures?
- What are similar insights and findings about school/learning environments across school sites, and what are unique to their particular contexts?
- What can adults learn from young people at their school sites about changes necessary to create robust, supportive, joyful learning environments for all students?
- What supports the ability of school staff to connect YPAR or youth-generated insights and findings to their processes of change at their sites? What are the barriers and challenges?
- How can formal and informal civic structures across school sites within a state create learning opportunities for school personnel and students that would have otherwise not been possible?

### From findings to action

Each community partner works with youth researchers to design or deepen their YPAR studies and make the connection between their YPAR teams' insights and systemic changes to school practices, policies, and cultures. Depending on the site, action plans can include disseminating research findings to the community through presentations, creating recommendations to include in district strategic plans, and implementing professional development for teachers.