PUBLIC ACHIEVEMENT

INITIATING A YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Lessons from the Cedar Riverside community

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CHANCE Capstone Project, Spring 2011

May 2011

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Youth play a pivotal role in healthy community development. Youth leaders, parents and researchers have recognized youth as assets in shaping communities and find youth civic engagement to produce positive externalities for both young people and the community. Understanding youth as community assets is a perspective many communities across the globe are not oriented towards, and its benefits are not always immediately obvious to the untrained eye. Research has shown that youth who engage in extracurricular civic action are more likely to adopt positive life trajectories than those who do not (Stella & Bolzau, 1951), and that communities with constructively active young people are more likely to produce high school graduates and experience less crime than those that do not (Zeldin, 2004).

The Cedar Riverside neighborhood in Minneapolis, Minnesota is a community making conscious steps towards understanding young people as contributing community actors. Historically youth in Cedar Riverside have been perceived as recipients of neighborhood assets, instead of contributors. Nevertheless in recent years young people and their advocates are making strides to re-construct the youth-image. Youth in Cedar Riverside face many challenges as residents of a low-income, majority new immigrant community. Area young people face a variety of barriers practical and psychological complicating their opportunities, especially when compared to young people not experiencing these risk factors.

The Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota is situated in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood. Five years ago students and faculty collaborated to initiate what is now the CHANCE (Cedar Humphrey Action for Neighborhood Collaborative Engagement) program and capstone, which aims to connect Humphrey students to community-based projects and research for the benefit of Cedar Riverside residents. In light of (1) youth civic engagement research, (2) the impact of civic engagement on communities, and (3) the challenges facing Cedar Riverside youth, one of the CHANCE projects for the 2010-11 academic year focused on initiating an extracurricular civic engagement and leadership development opportunity for local youth.

The three authors of this report (Gillaspey, Pierre, and Scheibel) are the CHANCE capstone participants that took on the project of coordinating the Public Achievement model—a youth civic engagement and leadership development program—to kick off fall of 2011 in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood. This article acts as our team's final report and a portion of our capstone project for the completion of the Masters degree programs of Public Policy and Public Affairs. It also represents a summary of lessons we learned through community directed work and the initiating of a youth program.

In initiating the Public Achievement model in Cedar riverside, we do not attempt to resolve the challenges young people and adolescents face in the neighborhood. Instead, we propose to offer a space where young people can build leadership skills and learn about civic action to shape the world around them. The young people in Cedar Riverside have assets, knowledge and passion for issues specific to their neighborhood. They have the skills needed to take the lead on projects that matter to them. The Public Achievement model provides them with the opportunity to develop and exercise this increased leadership capacity for a more positive and healthy community.

Positive youth development

A primary objective for the Cedar Riverside community as stated by residents and local leaders is that young people become conscious and alert to the issues affecting the neighborhood and its outlook.   As commonplace in many majority immigrant communities, youth in Cedar Riverside are struggling with issues of identity formation and differences based on race, class, ethnicity and culture. These youth also face the challenge of discerning their role in building and shaping their community. How young people respond to these challenges directly impacts their individual futures as well as the perception of the Cedar-Riverside community.

The challenge of projecting a positive youth-image for this particular group is great. In recent years the city and regional media has publicized numerous negative stories depicting including:

- Youth shootings
- Gang activity and loitering
- Street fights
- Human trafficking and trading sex
- Young men moving back to Somalia to fight
- Poor youth/ police relations

In addition to these headlines, the Cedar Riverside neighborhood ranks among the lowest City of Minneapolis' neighborhoods in terms of average annual household income) and many neighborhood households speak a language other than English in the home.

Research provides evidence that youth confronting these types of risk factors are at a higher likelihood to drop out of school, experience teen pregnancy, engage in crime, and less social responsible attitudes (Pearson & Voke, 2003; Kasper, et al, 2009). For many Cedar Riverside youth, English is not their first language. Language barriers affect access to services, performance in school and the ability to speak up, and may represent considerable challenges for young people to adjust themselves in the community and to build dialogues with their peers.

Researchers agree that youth involved in extracurricular activities and civic engagement are less likely to be involved in violence and delinquency, acquire a stronger work ethic, are more likely to maintain their cultural identity, achieve higher levels of education and obtain employment (Zeldin, 2004; Jensen, 2008; Pearson & Voke, 2003, Kasper, et al, 2009). They are also less likely use drugs, be a teen parent, be incarcerated or commit a crime than those not engaged in youth programming (Stella & Bolzau, 1951; Mohammed & Wheeler, 2001). Research shows that young people from all socioeconomic status and backgrounds need a mix of services, support and opportunities to stay engaged (Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001). By engaging youth in positive interactions with their peers and a caring adult via the Public Achievement model, young people are able to build the basic skills to develop leader abilities and keep their neighborhoods healthy.

Aware of these research findings, the community has responded by creating forums for youth conversation and creating organizations or groups to support the neighborhood's young people. Cedar-Riverside leaders, youth workers and activists recognize that youth are capable of addressing community problems and are responding by providing the space for youth to achieve these sought after positive youth development outcomes. Nearly every neighborhood sector has contributed to the interest in supporting area youth, including the business community, large West Bank institutions, youth workers and justice advocates. Community members envision local youth developing skills to be actively citizens in the shaping their neighborhood. They understand that personal and social development are key to strengthening a community's capacity to respond to its problems. As the expressed desire of the community is to focus on the assets youth contribute to the neighborhood and greater Minneapolis, a number of community organizations currently sponsor and support youth programs through philanthropic giving.

Neighborhood residents and leaders have voiced their preference for the youth themselves to be actively engaged in shaping Cedar Riverside's future through the addressing of community issues. Public Achievement in particular, as a youth development strategy, has the potential to engage Cedar Riverside youth in this way as the program encourages youth to pursue solutions to issues they identify as a team.

Public Achievement model

Public Achievement (PA) is a national youth initiative of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship. Its goal is to educate young people to become effective civic and political actors; in other words: to think and act as citizens. Public Achievement had its beginnings in the Office of the Mayor in 1990, when the newly elected St. Paul mayor sought ideas from youth during the strategic planning period at the beginning of his term. He received guidance in creativity, innovation and youth-focused

community development strategies. The search provided a model that actively engages youth in solving the problems of the city.

During strategic planning focus groups convened to glean youth feedback on PA, participants voiced that they wanted to be "doers" and leaders in helping build the community. Youth stated they would welcome adult "coaches" to aid them in this work.

One of the pilot sites for PA in St. Paul was St. Bernard's Grade School in the North End neighborhood. Dennis Donovan, the principal, was trained in Gremial organizing and embraced the idea of youth acting as organizers. PA was not only a classroom project; under Donovan's leadership the initiative was integrated into the everyday life of the school. A few years later Donovan became the National Organizer of Public Achievement and expanded the program to five states and 20 countries.

In Public Achievement, participants select issues on which they want to work and then work in teams of 6-12 to solve public problems. The work of the teams is undertaken with the help and guidance of coaches. Coaches can be undergraduate or graduate students or other volunteers, such as AmeriCorps or community members.

PA participants learn and utilize the skills of good community organizing. They select an issue that is close to them and about which they feel passionate. With the guidance of coaches they define the public issue, plan a strategy that is achievable given the make-up of their team, conduct research, and do a power analysis. Next, team members create and design a solution. Like any good organizing, reflection is critical component and used throughout the PA process. Project work concludes with presentations and the celebration of the team's achievements and learnings.

Public Achievement is unique in that it has successfully been implemented not only in urban centers, but also shaped to fit the needs and circumstances of a wide assortment of communities around the world. For this reason the program should be well suited for the diversity of the Cedar Riverside neighborhood.

Those committed to working with the program in Cedar Riverside for the fall of 2011 have direct experience with molding the PA model to a variety of cultural, political, religious, and societal circumstances. It can be expected that under their guidance, PA in Cedar Riverside will be fashioned according to the unique community circumstance and opportunities present within the neighborhood.

One ambition for PA in Cedar Riverside is that the program will provide an opportunity to connect and bring together youth groups serving the neighborhood. In response to community member's request, the initiation of the PA program in fall of 2011 will take place at two—and hopefully more—sites and may act as a bridge for communication across neighborhood youth programs. Healthy youth development is at the core of all existing Cedar Riverside youth programs, and PA is seen

by community members and PA veterans as a model that complements and builds upon existing programs.

Goals for Cedar Riverside's PA

The premise of Public Achievement (PA) is to promote youth to become "problem-solvers" in their communities and develop the skills to engage as active citizens. An empowering Cedar Riverside youth-focused initiative enables youth programs to develop a shared model of education and public work to build community assets. It is with this in mind that Public Achievement in Cedar Riverside pursues two main objectives.

1. **Youth contribute to public problem-solving.** Public Achievement aims to offer youth an opportunity to develop their potential though civic activism. The model creates space for young people to participate in community development. PA aims to increase the quality of community life by engaging youth as stakeholders in meaningful ways.

2. **Youth develop leadership skills.** Public Achievement will provide young people in Cedar Riverside an opportunity to develop and exercise leadership. The PA model aims to prepare young people to take on formal leadership roles in their futures and help them build skills that are crucial to their successful involvement in the community space. Thus, PA benefits both the individual youth and the greater community simultaneously.

Methodology

In nine months, the Cedar-Riverside Public Achievement program traveled from an idea, to a possibility, to reality. The steps taken to commence this program in nine months are repeatable. This outline of our methodology provides a detailed presentation of the process and tactics leading to the successful initiation of the youth leadership development program.   The methods by which the program was executed are explained below and can be summed into three main stages of activity: learning, engagement, and initiation.

Stage 1: Learning

For the first four months of our work on the initiation of Public Achievement, it was not certain that our team would be working on a project related to youth, civic engagement or leadership development. Our time was spent learning about the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. Throughout the learning stage our team aimed to leave behind our own preconceived community development and programming ideas and instead aimed to enter Cedar-Riverside with open ears, curiosity and a genuine

interest to support the community through means perceived by residents and leaders as timely and relevant. To achieve this, our team sought after learnings of two kinds: research and listening.

To prepare for meetings with local leaders and representatives our team, along with our Humphrey School of Public Affairs colleagues, conducted in-depth investigations of neighborhood data. Our research approach included:

- **Exploring census data.** We learned the breakdown of the residents by age, income, ethnic background, type of housing and more.
- **Examining civic data.** The City of Minneapolis tracks incidents of crime. We analyzed what the statistics showed when disaggregated per capita, by income, new immigrant status, commercial establishments, and other neighborhood characteristics.
- **Visiting websites.** Most organizations have websites. The design of the site, how the information is displayed, what is said and what is left unsaid all tell something about the organization. Organizations' missions, programming, budgets and leadership helped us sketch pictures of neighborhood organizations. While online information can provide insight, there are also limitations. Some community based organizations do not have the expertise or the time to update their web pages frequently enough to provide the information our team was looking for in terms of background research.
- **Reading news accounts and blogs.** Large media sources covered the big stories, but newsletters, neighborhood papers and blogs by community people tell a more complete story of issues and concerns.
- **Inviting in speakers**. A variety of speakers came to share with our class about the history of the West Bank, including topics such as safety, ethnic groups and the city government's relationship to the neighborhood.

We tried to approach community members, and convey we understood, that their time is both valuable and scarce.   We also tried to put in the leg work to make contact with the appropriate individuals and only request information that could not be researched nor deducted independently.

Concurrent to this research, we listened. Instead of sharing our assumptions with community members for project ideas we translated our research findings into informed questions. Residents of Cedar Riverside expressed feelings in the past of being a "laboratory" for students and social scientists to study and experiment with. The neighborhood is one of unique characteristics appealing to those interested in community based research. Too often the focus of University faculty and students focused on the ills, not the assets of the neighborhood. It is easy to understand why residents would be put off by this; our team was intentional about hearing these concerns and responding appropriately.

The staff of the Brian Coyle Center shared with us valuable advice on the opening evening of our class. Their advice was echoed by others throughout the year. Key points were:

- "Don't study us," studies just end up on some shelf and gather dust.
- "We don't need another youth program." Cedar Riverside is rich in programs and assets, build on them, including the work of previous students.
- "Make it sustainable." Cedar Riverside residents express mistrust for outsiders who come into the neighborhood and create something, even something good, that only lasts for one season.
- "Help us be our own voice." Create and support projects that engage the community and build a stronger voice for the neighborhood.

Having prepared for stakeholder meetings, we hoped to arrive to these face-to-face interactions informed and invested; aimed to be approachable and portray our openness to criticism. In spring of 2011 we spoke with academics on the neighborhood's history, interfaced with organizers and business people, hearing their vision of the future of the neighborhood in terms of space and community, and we engaged with city council people to learn about the governance and political environment surrounding Cedar-Riverside happenings. This season of learning was challenging; often residents of the Cedar-Riverside voiced concerns differing from those found in our research and media reports.

After four months of repeated cycles of research and listening, we presented a series of project ideas based on our analysis of community member's reports regarding pressing issues we might address. These items were shared at a community forum, and residents and community leaders ranked and voted on the issues they believed should receive the greatest attention. Positive youth development opportunities ranked high in the voting process and there was support for a project addressing youth as contributors-to instead of recipients-of society.

Stage 1: Key lessons

Listen! From day-one our instructors reminded us to listen to the community. By walking neighborhood streets and engaging community members we learned the value of hearing from unexpected voices. Everyone has a lens though which they examine their circumstances; as a team we learned to identify this lens and consider how it shaped an actor's perception of our work or response to our cause. For example, a new small business owner expressed that he not only wanted us to spread the word about his barbeque, but he also shared his thoughts regarding was needed in the community. At the Brian Coyle Community Center we heard about Cedar Riverside youth relationships with law enforcement and educating youth about their rights and listened to advice instructing CHANCE participants to engage in projects producing tangible results instead of reports that will sit on a shelf collecting dust.

There is more than one way to learn. By using a variety of sources and connecting with individuals who serve in a wide spectrum of neighborhood roles and functions, the PA team was able to glean a more robust understanding of the neighborhoods situation and issues.

Be aware of past projects and build on previous work. There is no need to "re-invent the wheel." CHANCE has been active in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood for the past five years. Each semester new capstone courses bring a fresh group of students eager to put their skills and learning to work in the community. There are likely faculty and staff that bring relationships from previous years. Student service groups will have had previous project and events with the neighborhoods. Build on their work; do not waste the time and patience of community members to do the same research multiple times.

Get out of the classroom. There is no substitute for meeting people in the neighborhood. From the very first night of class we made an effort to be out and meeting residents and employees of Cedar Riverside.

Be open to advice. When the staff at Brian Coyle expressed their disenchantment with the University we did our best to readjust our strategy based on the information the staff provided us. The PA team wanted to create a program valuable to Cedar Riverside that addressed their needs; it is our hope that by responding directly to suggestions from community members that PA will enter Cedar Riverside as a respected entity.

Let the community vote. By leaving the final decision for CHANCE capstone projects up to neighborhood residents and Cedar Riverside leaders, we did our best to send a message to community members that we were serious about the fact that these projects for them. It was our aim to provide something they could use, so we needed to hear from them what they wanted.

Stage 2: Engagement

Months five, six, and seven of the Cedar Riverside Public Achievement project work were spent meeting with stakeholders. The PA team needed to engage five specific groups of contributors for the initiation of the PA program in Cedar Riverside to be successful: Local youth, potential PA sites, coach connection points, coach coordinators, and connected to the mission of sustaining the program long term.

Youth. As former youth workers, our team could not justify the creation of a youth program aimed at addressing issues of concern to young people without having youth involved in the initiation of the program. We deliberated over how to accomplish this, and began by asking neighborhood youth in the Cedar Riverside Youth Council at the Brian Coyle Community Center what they thought of

the PA model and participating in addressing neighborhood issues they saw as pertinent to their situation. We heard from youth that PA seemed like viable vehicle by which to address public problems, and that they would be interested to get involved. This positive reaction caused our team to determine that there was interest for the program.

Next our team wanted to know two things: 1) What issues do youth in Cedar Riverside see as important? Do youth think about youth violence and the negative media attention their neighborhood receives? 2) Do young people perceive themselves to be able to do something about their concerns— do they see themselves as change makers? We wanted to know if youth thought they could reshape the image of youth in Cedar Riverside.

For this we teamed with a group of four students in an organizing course at the University of Minnesota. These students conducted a focus group for area youth to gather feedback and further gauge interest in the PA program. Fifteen students from the Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota and two from Trinity Lutheran identified issues of interest and concern to them: pollution, lack of recycling, overcrowding, a need for a bigger community center and playground, more activities for youth, too many boundaries as to where they can play/relax, no nearby library, and street fights during the summer. They said one person alone could not make a difference and they would need to form groups with like minded people and get adults involved. That observation sounded a lot like the PA philosophy and model.

Sites. Keeping in mind that neighborhood residents were wary of new programs and groups, we began the search for PA sites by looking at already existing youth programs that might be interested in adopting the PA model. These groups were asked to consider organizing one or two PA teams. Safe Place Homework Help at Trinity Lutheran Congregation and afterschool program at Cedar Riverside Community School both expressed excitement at the opportunity to engage youth in this fashion. Other groups like WellShare with Confederation of Somali Communities and the Cedar Riverside Youth Council (CRYC) at Brian Coyle already have PA-like structures that offer youth opportunities to address public issues of interest to them. With these groups our team discussed how the PA program might support their efforts and connect these groups to resources.

Coach connections. For Public Achievement to exist there must be coaches to facilitate the PA teams. Thinking in terms of the program's long term sustainability, it was determined that we will build partnerships with institutions and organizations that house adults who will likely take interest in the coach role. The objective was to build "pipelines" of coaches, so that every year there would be a new group of students to take the positions of coaches transitioning out of their roles. Due to Public Achievement's history in the neighborhood, first at the University of Minnesota, and now at Augsburg College, the model has already gained credibility among the two schools decision makers. Also, in several cases these decision makers had in the past worked on PA directly.

In the Leadership Minor and Youth Studies Departments at the University, professors will include the PA coach role as an option for their mandatory experiential learning and/or course credit. Augsburg supports the Bonner Fellow's program, which is a scholarship requiring recipients to spend 10 hours per week in community service. Engaging as a PA coach would meet this requirement and offer incentive for the student to maintain involvement for the entire academic year, and potentially for all four years of their studies. Opportunities to receive course credit and funding increase the likelihood for pipelines to be built from each of these coach connections.

Coach coordinators. One learning we gleaned based on our conversations with those familiar with the Public Achievement model is that programs that received the highest satisfaction ratings from coaches and youth participants were those that provided guidance for the coaches, much like the role of the coach for the young people. For PA in CR to be successful, our team realized that a "coach coordinator" was a necessary component. Fortunately we were connected with the husband and wife team Ross and Christine VeLure Roholt who have initiated the PA model and other youth civic engagement models in Minneapolis as well as internationally in Northern Ireland, Palestine, and South Africa, etc.

Ross and Christine agreed to conduct orientation training and ongoing debriefing sessions for Cedar Riverside coaches over the upcoming 2011-12 academic year. They also contributed their expertise to create in Cedar Riverside a Public Achievement program both mentoring and guidance for youth participants, and congruently a leadership development opportunity for young adults interested in careers as youth workers, organizers, or community leaders.

Sustainability. From the listening process, we learned that Cedar Riverside community members have little interest in investing in short-term youth programs. Residents have seen youth programs operate for a season and then lose momentum, or the coordinators leave, etc. We heard that sustainability was key in order to gain community backing for the project. It was for this reason our team joined with the Somali Justice and Advocacy Center (SJAC) located in the neighborhood. Executive Director, Dahir Jabreel was willing to house the PA initiative, and thus relieve PA sites of the burden of coordination. To the advantage of the neighborhood, SJAC can then also act as an entity bridging youth and youth leaders throughout the community.

Since SJAC's staff is small, our team worked with Jabreel to create a possible position for a Promise Fellow or VISTA, from the AmeriCorps volunteer program. This person will be titled "PA Staff" and coordinate the PA program in Cedar Riverside, acting as a liaison between PA sites, coach connections, and the coach coordinators. It is estimated that 8-14 hours per week of this person's time will be allocated towards the coordinating the PA program and the remainder of this individual's time will be directed at other SJAC initiatives.

Stage 2: Key lessons

Create a vehicle for youth voice. Obtaining the input and ideas from youth for this youth-focused project was a key ingredient. The focus group the students from the organizing class put together provided feedback from area youth that shaped the PA program model for Cedar Riverside.

Respect and work with existing programs. The Cedar Riverside community had a number of existing programs, so new youth programming was not needed. Instead, Public Achievement complemented current neighborhood programming, enhancing youth groups already successful and trusted in Cedar Riverside.

Build the capacity of organizations. Community engagement projects should build the capacity of organizations. One of our primary partners, SJAC, had a respected and charismatic executive director, but little or no financial support. We saw that if Public Achievement were to be successful, we needed to work with SJAC to secure staffing and also provide staff support to work on a development plan.

Stage 3: Initiation

After raising awareness and gathering supportive partners, we solidified these commitments. Since clarity and good communication are necessary for any project with partners and can enhance the results, we prepared memos of understanding to outline expectations with our two primary partners and later with our sites, coach connections, and coach coordinators. This process cemented each party's understanding of what the project would entail. In working with community groups, one does not need lawyers to draft the agreements, but should reflect common sense and understanding. The agreements included expectations and products to be developed.

Throughout the process of gleaning support and solidifying commitments, our team asked practical questions concerning what each contributing party would need to perform their role well. We decided on the following for support mechanisms:

- A PA Staff Handbook, for the coordinator housed at the SJAC. This book includes everything needed to initiate the PA program in Cedar Riverside for the fall of 2011, including background on Public Achievement, contact information, history, and vision/ mission of project partner organizations, information regarding history of the Cedar Riverside neighborhood, etc.
- Resources for coaches. Each pair of coaches will be given a "tool-kit" filled with markers, paper, tape, blue tack, a beach ball, etc. These items will aid coaches as they facilitate group learning, encourage team bonding, and create deliverables. Coaches will also receive a list of resources regarding leading a team, working with second generation immigrant youth, history of and

challenges specific to the Cedar Riverside neighborhood, etc. These will be made available to coaches through the coach coordinators and on the web.

- Training curriculum for coaches. Our team is working with Ross and Christine VeLure Roholt as they compile this training resource.

Another important factor to maintain program sustainability is building in metrics to measure progress. Funders, project partners and community members are interested to see if PA in Cedar Riverside meets projected objectives and at what speed the program advances towards its vision for a safe neighborhood with active you citizens contributing to public work. In order to track accomplishments and growth, our team collaborated with the 2011-12 coach coordinators to build in evaluation procedures and tools to provide both quantitative and qualitative data to help in the annual analysis of the PA-CR program.

In order to recognize feat of initiating a youth leadership development and civic engagement program model in nine months, our team hosted a celebration in the neighborhood. All stakeholders and project partners were invited for hor'dourves, song and an update of the PA program status. The event provided the space for community members and project contributors to meet, and for people to build enthusiasm around the project.

Stage 3: Key lessons

Memorandums of Understanding are important. It is prudent to have a written and signed, even if informal, agreement of project expectations and objectives. This action brings clarity to each partner's role and the purpose for the collaboration.

Create tools for implementation. Set programs up to succeed. Provide the tools necessary to move the program towards its objectives.

Celebrate Accomplishments. The end of the Semester end brought an end to the student phase of the project. Community projects engage a number of community members. Stakeholders and people with whom we visited were invited to a community celebration to share with everyone what was done and what was in place for the fall. Over 50 people contributed to our project, however only 20 were able to make it to the celebration event.

Reflect and evaluate. Any project requires reflection and evaluation. Our primary partners evaluated our work and the team did a self-assessment. Public Achievement in Cedar Riverside is designed for on-going reflection and evaluation.

Conclusion

To sum the lessons learned through the initiation of the Public Achievement program in Cedar Riverside we have listed the key learnings highlighted at the end of each section throughout the body of this article. With these tips, combined with the details described above, the process for community backed program initiation is achievable and repeatable.

Table 1: Community youth program initiation learnings summarized

Learning	
Tips for working with the community	*Examples from the PA project in Cedar Riverside*
Listen!	Heard invited speakers on a variety of topics relating to the neighborhood. Attended neighborhood meetings. Engaged with the city ward's Councilmember.
Remember: there is more than one way to learn.	A variety of sources were researched and viewpoints called upon in the planning stages of the CR PA program. Throughout the projects entirety, youth development theory was revisited.
Be aware of past projects and build on previous work.	U of MN students have engaged in four previous years of project work in Cedar Riverside. Past research and recommendations for action were available online, these documents were accessed throughout the course of the project work.
Get out of the classroom. Spend time in and observing the community first hand.	Walked around the neighborhood, enjoyed local eateries and specialty shops, attended community events, advocated for and supported issues affecting the community.
Be open to advice.	Humility and collaboration in project initiation and implementation helped our team gain respect in the community. We asked for advice and support, instead of telling stakeholders our "plan" for the neighborhood.
Let the community vote.	Held a community forum, proposed project ideas to forum attendees and held a vote. Projects were determined by community members to ensure they aligned with resident's vision for the neighborhood.
Engagement	
Tips for working with the community	*Examples from the PA project in Cedar Riverside*
Create a vehicle for youth voice.	Worked with team of students to organize a focus group session for youth to share their ideas for issues for PA teams to address, spoke with youth about their perceptions of their situation as youth in CR, and gleaned youth interest in the PA model.
Respect and work with existing programs.	Sought advice from Brian Coyle Community Center, the largest youth service provider in the neighborhood.

Build organization capacity to support project work.	Created a position for an AmeriCorps member, Bonner Fellow or intern to carry out the program in the Fall.
Initiation	
Tips for working with the community	*Examples from the PA project in Cedar Riverside*
Memorandums of Understanding are important.	Agreements were signed by key partners, potential sites and coach connections.
Create tools for implementation.	A handbook with steps to initiate the PA in the fall was created for SJAC, resources tool-kits and web-based information were compiled for coach support, training curriculum and schedule for coaches was established.
Reflect and evaluate.	By reflecting and evaluating the program initiation progress our team was able to make adjustments throughout the process to adapt to new circumstances and unforeseen challenges.
Celebrate accomplishments.	A community event was held to thank and introduce project partners. Food and musical entertainment were provided.

Learning is an ongoing process; our team continues to grow as we work with and listen to community members and project stakeholders. Program initiation is the first step, the learnings gleaned from the program process are on-going. The tips and suggestions highlighted in the table above provide for our team a framework to approach community based project work, it is our hope that you find these useful and update this list as you embark on community based partnerships in your neighborhood.

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