



# CHILDREN & YOUTH COMMUNITY PLAN (CYCP) REPORT CARD



## ALEXANDRIA'S PROGRESS TOWARDS ENSURING EVERY CHILD SUCCEEDS TODAY AND TOMORROW

### VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1

This issue reports the progress made on promoting youth empowerment between April 2021 - October 2024

### GOAL

All Children, Youth, and Families have Positive Experiences

### ALEXANDRIA SPOTLIGHT

This issue shines the spotlight on the twelve youth who participated in and graduated from Alexandria's inaugural Jr. City Academy. For six weeks, this group of youth learned about their local government and how it works. Each week, the Academy traveled to a City of Alexandria Department to learn about what the Department does to serve the public, the issues it is responsible for addressing, and how individuals access resources. The Academy met with the City Manager, the Mayor and members of City Council, the City Attorney, firefighters, judges, police, and staff from the Race and Social Equity Office, Code Administration, Court Service Unit, Alexandria's Sheriff's Office, Transportation and Environmental Services, and Planning and Zoning.

After the program, the Academy's graduates reported that they have a better understanding of how their government works, how to access the City's services and resources, and are more informed of the various careers in government. Feedback collected from evaluations revealed that because of the program, the participants feel more comfortable approaching City leaders and increased their leadership skills. One graduate of the program - Kurt Campos - now serves as a Youth Representative on the Gang Task Force! City Leaders also benefited from the experience. It gave them the opportunity to engage youth on current issues, problems, and projects, and encouraged them to consider pursuing careers in public service.

Because this was a pilot program, input from the Academy's graduates is especially valuable for shaping future Academies. The program sparked a deeper interest in civics and meeting decision makers. Several youth suggested longer tours and more time to talk with City staff. Others gave recommendations for expanding the program: "I would love for you guys to include a trip to learn about our school board! As a student, it would help to understand where we can go if we have issues concerning our school." Another participant set their sights beyond Alexandria: "Would it be possible to go to DC and go to buildings like congress?"

The participants affirmed the success of the pilot and the City's considerations in organizing future Academies. "I really enjoyed every single one of the visits. It was really fun to learn about the different resources around the city. I really hope that this wasn't a one time thing and we can continue to do these same activities." "It's a wonderful program and I would definitely love to see it next year and I would recommend it to everyone!" The Academy will likely run again in the spring of 2025.



Photos: Jr. City Academy graduates are acknowledged by City Council; visit Firehouse 206, and Police HQ

## RESULT

All young people perceive that adults in the community value youth

## WHY THIS MATTERS

"Community Values Youth" is one of the 40 Developmental Assets and for good reason. Research shows that young people who perceive that adults in the community value young people are more likely to grow up healthy and avoid risky behaviors, such as alcohol and other drug use, violence, and early sexual activity, exhibit leadership, value diversity, and succeed in school.

Only 17% of Alexandria's youth perceive that adults in the community value their opinions and input, according to [Search Institute surveys](#).

White youth are twice as likely as Latino youth to report feeling

valued. [Evidence suggests](#) that the experience of racial, gender, age, and other forms of discrimination are associated with low self-esteem, depressive symptoms, acculturative stress and psychological conflicts, and anxiety, all of which may contribute to this trend. Latino youth experiencing discrimination based on English fluency, immigration concerns, negative stereotypes, and skin color may also report lower rates of feeling valued by their community.

When young people feel appreciated and respected by those around them, they are more likely to develop a strong sense of self-worth and confidence. This, in turn, equips them with the resilience needed to navigate the challenges and the motivation to contribute to society in meaningful ways. Whether through volunteering, participating in community events, or pursuing leadership roles, they become active participants in shaping the world around them.

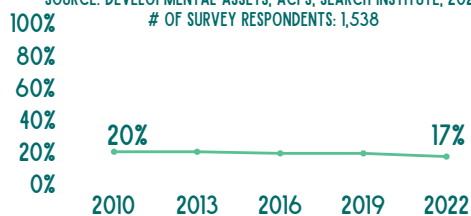
This sense of agency not only benefits the individual but also strengthens the fabric of the community as a whole, fostering a culture of collaboration and civic responsibility.



## HOW ARE WE DOING? THE MOST CURRENT DATA AVAILABLE TELL US THAT:

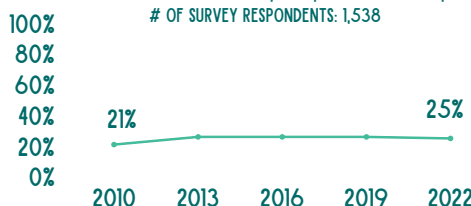
### COMMUNITY VALUES YOUTH

SOURCE: DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS, ACPS, SEARCH INSTITUTE, 2022  
# OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS: 1,538

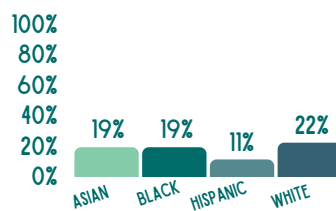


### YOUTH AS RESOURCES

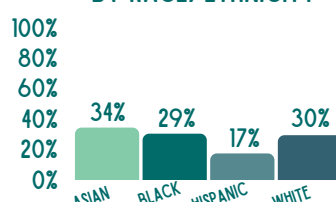
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### COMMUNITY VALUES YOUTH BY RACE/ETHNICITY



### YOUTH AS RESOURCES BY RACE/ETHNICITY



**Trends:** Since 2010, the number of youth reporting that they feel valued by their community has decreased by 15%. White youth are twice as likely as Hispanic youth to report feeling valued. This gap may exist, in part, due to Hispanic youth experiencing discrimination based on English fluency, immigration concerns, negative stereotypes, and skin color.

In 2022, a quarter of youth surveyed reported feeling seen as a resource, a 19% increase since 2010. Asian youth are twice as likely to report feeling seen as a resource as Hispanic youth.

## STRATEGY

**Strategy #39.** Promote youth empowerment by sharing decision-making power with youth

## CHAMPION

Department of Community & Human Services - Youth Development Team



## IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

**Progress with promoting youth empowerment:**



1 Strategy  
3 Action Steps  
**100%**  
are in progress or fully implemented

## PARTNERS

- Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy
- Alexandria City Public Schools
- Alexandria Libraries
- Alexandria Sexual Assault Center
- Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities
- Alexandria Health Department
- Capital Youth Empowerment Program
- Court Service Unit
- Children, Youth, and Families Collaborative Commission
- Gang Prevention Community Task Force
- Office of Communications and Public Information
- Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE SINCE 2021?

### PROVIDE TRAININGS, SUPPORT, & ENCOURAGEMENT



Advocated for the City Council and ACPS School Board to use youth voice inclusionary practices when making decisions regarding the budget, selecting a Superintendent, and more

Advocated for the City to compensate youth serving on boards and commissions, which the City adopted in the FY25 budget



Created a **Jr. City Academy** for youth modeled after the City's Citizens Academy

Engaged scholars in Project Citizen, a curriculum that provides a first-hand approach to learning about our complex system of government and how to shape public policy. Provided scholars the opportunity to display their research and policy suggestions to their community through a "Showcase."



Engaged youth through evidence-based programs, support services, and education programs that built their leadership and decision-making skills

Hosted four Youth Leadership Conferences

Continue to engage and connect YLC Alumni to to leadership opportunities



Photo: 2023 Youth Leadership Conference Participants



Offered Developmental Assets trainings to City staff on a monthly basis

Created and delivered a youth engagement training that explains the benefits of working with youth to the CYFCC

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE SINCE 2021?

### INCREASE ACCESS TO INFORMATION



Identified equitable approaches to communicate with diverse array of youth audiences (Youth Safety & Resiliency Initiative)



Identified Boards and Commission groups with designated seats for youth and young adult members (see "Resources" section)



Identified and promoted programs across Alexandria that provide leadership, civic engagement, and decision making opportunities for youth (see "Resources" section)



Working to create a centralized location (online and in-person) for youth to

access opportunities, resources and provide feedback through a partnership between ACPS, DCHS, RPCA, Alexandria Libraries, Office of Communications and Public Information, and Alexandria Health Department



Created a partnership with ACPS Communications for organizations to promote opportunities on social media and Canvas



Used the Alexandria Teen Life Instagram and Twitter accounts shared by ACAP, SAPCA, and SAC to post youth-related matters, resources, leadership opportunities, and other content. Youth help develop the base of youth users and content

### PROVIDE LEADERSHIP & DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES



Intentionally recruited youth, particularly those from underrepresented communities, to fill vacant youth seats on the CYFCC



Hired and onboarded Alexandria students to serve as Youth Ambassadors to engage their peers and community members in preventing youth violence and promote youth resilience

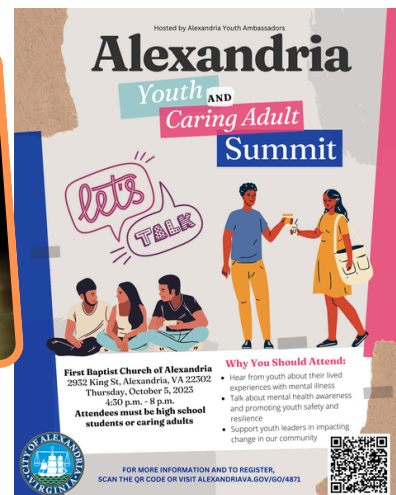


Hosted several Youth Speak Up events

Hosted the Youth and Caring Adult Summit, planned and facilitated by youth



Photo: An Alexandria Youth Ambassador addressing the audience at the Youth & Caring Adult Summit





## HOW MUCH HAVE WE DONE SINCE 2021?



### PROVIDE TRAININGS, SUPPORT, & ENCOURAGEMENT

**258 YOUTH** have attended  
**4 YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCES** hosted through a collaboration between ACAP, SAC, and SAPCA

**12 YOUTH** participated in and graduated from the inaugural Jr. City Academy

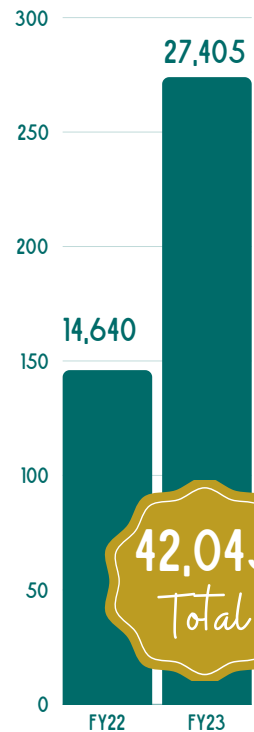
**23 ADULTS** attended a youth engagement training

**40+ PROGRAMS & CLUBS** offered in Alexandria aim to build leadership skills among youth

**11 CITY AGENCIES** were represented in the Jr. City Academy

### # OF YOUTH & ADULTS ENGAGED IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

SOURCE: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT TEAM



### YOUTH WHO PARTICIPATED IN A PROGRAM THAT BUILT THEIR LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN ALEXANDRIA (UNDUPLICATED)



\*CYF - Children, Youth, & Families



### PROVIDE LEADERSHIP & DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES

**10 YOUTH** led the Youth & Caring Adult Summit

**14 SEATS** City-sponsored boards and commissions are dedicated to youth and young adults

**17% OF ALEXANDRIA'S BOARDS & COMMISSIONS** have dedicated seats for youth and young adults (9 out of 54)

**3 YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCILS** at least are active in Alexandria

**20 YOUTH** at least serve in leadership positions on boards and commissions in Alexandria

**11 BOARDS & COMMISSIONS** at least in Alexandria have seats dedicated to youth and young adults



### INCREASE ACCESS TO INFORMATION

**348 SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS** on Alexandria Teen Life

**761 SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS** on Alexandria Teen Life created by youth

**350+ RESOURCES** included in the Alexandria Resource Directory for Youth & Youth Adults

## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

### FEEDBACK FROM YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS, 2021-2023

SOURCE: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT TEAM



Photos: 2024 Youth Leadership Conference participants

100%  
of participants strongly  
agreed or agree,  
"Overall, the  
conference met my  
expectations"

100%  
of participants strongly  
agreed or agreed,  
"These workshops  
provided information  
and ideas that are  
helpful to me"

100%  
of participants strongly  
agreed or agreed,  
"I plan to use  
information I learned  
during these workshops  
in the future"



Photo: Jr. City Academy visits an Alexandria Courtroom where they meet Judge Cullen, Deputy City Attorney Christina Brown, and Court Service Unit Director, Mike Mackey.

"It is well structured. I really enjoyed every single one of the visits, they were really fun to learn about the different resources around the city, I really hope that this wasn't a one time thing and that in future years we can continue to do these same activities. Thank you."

"I think the academy can be improved if we have more tours. When we go on tours it gives us an opportunity to see the buildings and how work life is for individuals who work there."

### JR. CITY ACADEMY

Jr. City Academy participants were engaged for  
**90 MINUTES, ONCE A WEEK, FOR 6 WEEKS**

### FEEDBACK FROM 2024 JR. CITY ACADEMY GRADUATES

SOURCE: COURT SERVICE UNIT

"I wish we had more time during our visits so we can like see everything and everyone in that facility that we go to and have longer tours."



Photo: At the Alexandria Sheriff's Office, Gang Prevention Community Task Force Chair, Jim Dillon introduces the Jr. Academy to Sheriff Casey, Sergeant Ignacio, and Sergeant Branch.

## IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?



### PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & TRAININGS

**32 YOUTH**

employed by the City of Alexandria to empower other youth to make healthy decisions through skill-building, coaching, and support

**\$5,000**

of funding from the City budget will be used to support young Boards, Commissions, and Committee members - contingent



### PROVIDE LEADERSHIP & DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES



**FEEDBACK FROM YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS**  
2021 2022 2023  
SOURCE: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT TEAM

96%

of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "As a result of participating in the conference, I am now more interested in being active in the Alexandria community."



100%

of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "As a result of participating in the conference, I feel better prepared to be a leader"



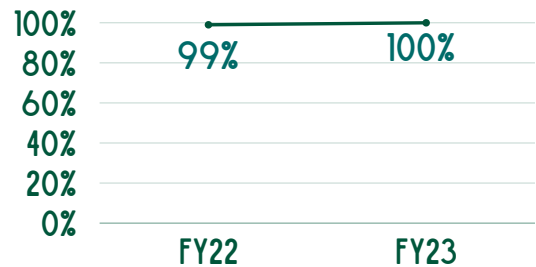
100%

of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statements, "As a result of participating in the conference, I made new connections with community leaders."



Above: Photos from the 2024 Youth Leadership Conference taken by Peer Advocate, Chloe Yokitis

**YOUTH REPORTING A POSITIVE CHANGE AFTER PARTICIPATING IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING**  
SOURCE: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT TEAM



**FEEDBACK FROM THE GRADUATES OF THE JUNIOR CITY ACADEMY 2024**  
SOURCE: COURT SERVICE UNIT

80%  
report being more or very familiar with Alexandria's various City departments

100%  
report feeling more comfortable approaching a City Official or authority figure in the City of Alexandria after completing the Academy

100%  
report being more knowledgeable and comfortable accessing city resources after completing the Academy

70%  
report seeing themselves as a leader in their city, school, or community after completing the Academy

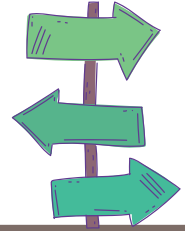


Above: Christian Brandt from Planning & Zoning shows the Jr. City Academy a Land Use Map at City Hall

## WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

### FROM NOW UNTIL 2025, WE WILL:

- Offer more Jr. City Academies in the future
- Host youth forums on a quarterly basis
- Create more opportunities for youth to engage in planning efforts in Alexandria
- Develop a youth manual with youth input that provides adults with detailed guidance based on best practices for working with young people



## RESOURCES

### TIPS FOR BUILDING THE ASSETS “COMMUNITY VALUES YOUTH” AND “YOUTH AS RESOURCES”

Young people’s perceptions can tell you a lot about your community and what needs to happen so they feel the community values them. Ask young people what they think. Acknowledge their opinions, even if you don’t agree. Work together to turn your community into a place that values its young people.

#### ALSO TRY THIS:

**In your home and family:** Ask your child’s opinion about something in the news. Listen carefully, without interrupting. Discuss the topic (agreeing to disagree, if necessary).

**In your neighborhood and community:** Serve on a community committee and seek out young people’s feedback about specific issues. Let them know you greatly appreciate their presence and participation. Encourage civic groups to include young people in critical conversations.

**In your school or youth program:** Engage the young people in your school or program as leaders and decision makers. Get their input on school board or program directors’ decisions. Invite them to discuss their experiences with the school board or program directors.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP, & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### LIST OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS WITH DESIGNATED YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT SEATS

- Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy Board
- Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force
- Children, Youth And Families Collaborative Commission
- Commission for the Arts
- Commission For Women
- Commission on Employment
- Commission on HIV/AIDS
- Commission on information Technology
- George Washington Celebration Committee
- Park and Recreation Commission
- Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria

### YOUTH-LED ADVISORY GROUPS/LEADERSHIP COUNCILS

- Campagna Center’s Youth Leadership Council
- Alexandria Libraries Teen Advisory Group
- Act for Alexandria’s Youth Philanthropy Council

### YOUTH-LED CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- ACPS Clubs and Organizations
- Keep It 360
- Untouchables

### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS

- 4-H/Youth - Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Alexandria Junior Academy
- Boy Scouts of America
- Volunteer Alexandria - Youth Engaged in Service (YES)
- Girl Scout Council of the Nation’s Capital
- Liberty’s Promise
- Northern Virginia Urban League
- ACPS Project Citizen and ...?

### LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

- Campagna Kids - The Campagna Center
- Community Lodgings
- Boys & Girls Club
- Girl Scout Council of the Nation’s Capital
- Move2Learn
- Project Discovery
- Ruby Tucker Family Center
- RunningBrooke
- Untouchables
- Wilderness Kids Alexandria
- YMCA - After-School Program
- Youth Development Programs