

Effects of YMCA High School Youth  
Institute on Grades, Attendance and  
Standardized Test Scores  
(2012 – 2013)

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February, 2014

## **Introduction**

The YMCA of Greater Long Beach High School Youth Institute is a comprehensive out-of-school program that uses technology as an integral mechanism for promoting positive youth development and enhancing the academic success and career readiness of low-income, culturally-diverse high school students. The goals of the Youth Institute are to: (a) improve the technology, career, leadership and decision-making skills of these youth to promote readiness for higher education or career entry after graduation, (b) improve academic achievement and stimulate interest in higher education among low-income, culturally-diverse, urban high school youth, and (c) promote bonding to pro-social adults and community attachment among urban youth to ensure that they remain engaged in their schools and communities. Classes enter each summer with an intensive eight-week program. Upon graduation from the summer program, participants become “Youth Institute Alumni,” who are then able to voluntarily participate in a wide range of year-round programs throughout their high school years. Year-round involvement opportunities include, but are not limited to, digital art labs, homework assistance, academic advising, personal/home advising, community service, field trips, college readiness, paid technology and mentoring assignments, community leadership positions and social work support. The program has been in operation since June, 2001. This is the seventh year in which the program effects on grades, attendance, and test scores have been explored.

## **Methods**

### **Data Collection**

In order to be included in the grade evaluation, both the student and their parent signed an informed consent allowing researchers to collect their grades, attendance and

test scores from the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD). This information was collected using only school district identification numbers. Research staff from LBUSD then randomly selected a comparison sample of high school students who were matched to the Youth Institute (YI) sample based on gender, ethnicity and year in school.

Approximately four comparison students were matched for each YI participant. The district provided academic grade point average (GPA), total GPA, cumulative academic GPA, cumulative total GPA, absences, truancies, English Language Arts (ELA) and Math content standard test scores for 2012-2013 academic year. The pre-test measures for these analyses were taken from the end of the 2011-12 academic year or beginning of 2012-2013 academic year for 9<sup>th</sup> graders, and the post-test measures were taken at the end of the 2012-13 academic year.

### **Sample Description**

Ninety-one (51%) of the YI participants who finished the program in the summers of 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 had both parent and child informed consents, and some useable data for the 2012-13 academic year. For these analyses, YI youth were divided into “Active,” and “Non-Active” groups. Sixty-six (73%) were considered active (attended 10 or more activities in the current year or 30 or more over the past two years) during the 2012-13 academic year. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the “Active” YI sample ( $N = 66$ ), the “Non-Active” YI sample ( $N = 25$ ), and the matched, comparison sample ( $N = 388$ ). There was no significant gender, ethnic, or grade level differences among the three groups.

Table 1  
Sample Demographics for the 2012 – 2013 Academic Year

	Active YI Participants		Non-Active YI Participants		Comparison Students	
	(N = 66)		(N = 25)		(N = 388)	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	53%	35	64%	16	58%	225
Female	47%	31	36%	9	42%	163
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
Latino	65%	43	68%	17	66%	255
African-American	20%	13	4%	1	16%	62
Asian-American/Pacific Islander	12%	8	24%	6	14%	56
European-American	3%	2	4%	1	4%	15
<b>Grade</b>						
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	27%	18	4%	1	19%	72
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	38%	25	36%	9	38%	149
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	21%	14	32%	8	25%	98
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	14%	9	28%	7	18%	69

**\*\*Significant at the .05 level**

### Analysis

Multivariate analysis of co-variance (MANCOVA) was used to compare outcome differences between YI and comparison students on all of the academic measures while controlling for baseline measures. Two different analyses were done; the first compared all YI participants and the matched comparison students, while the second compared “Active” YI participants and matched comparison students.

### Academic Comparisons between Youth Institute Participants and Comparison Students for 2012-13

As shown in Table 2, there were no significant differences between YI participants and comparison students on any of the academic measures.

Table 2  
Academic Comparisons between YI Participants and Comparison Students for 2012-13

Measure	YI Participants		Comparison Students		F-Value
	Adjusted Mean	N	Adjusted Mean	N	
Academic GPA	2.48	86	2.47	365	.02
Total GPA	2.61	90	2.61	374	.01
Cumulative Academic GPA	2.51	89	2.52	383	.04
Cumulative Total GPA	2.63	89	2.63	383	.00
Absences	6.82	90	7.53	384	.67
Truancies	3.02	90	3.10	384	.01
Content Standards					
English Language Arts†	357.11	64	352.32	304	1.38
Math†	307.62	61	307.60	276	.00

\*\* Significant at the .05 level

†10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders only

### Academic Comparisons between Active Youth Institute Participants and Comparison Students for 2012-13

As shown in Table 3, there were no significant differences between Active YI participants and comparison students on any of the academic measures.

Table 3  
Academic Comparisons between Active YI Participants and Comparison Students for  
2012-13

Measure	Active YI Participants		Comparison Students		F-Value
	Adjusted Mean	N	Adjusted Mean	N	
Academic GPA	2.43	63	2.44	270	.02
Total GPA	2.55	65	2.58	274	.09
Cumulative Academic GPA	2.48	64	2.49	278	.01
Cumulative Total GPA	2.60	64	2.60	278	.00
Absences	6.93	65	7.15	279	.04
Truancies	3.22	65	3.03	279	.05
Content Standards					
English Language Arts†	359.27	47	354.12	228	1.16
Math†	310.29	45	309.80	210	.00

\*\* Significant at the .05 level

†10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders only

### Conclusions

One of the primary goals of the Youth Institute is to help promote better academic success for low-income, culturally-diverse youth. In the current study, YI participants were compared with a random, matched comparison group of high school students to determine the effects of the YI on grades, attendance, and test scores. Unlike prior years, when YI youth demonstrated significantly better outcomes in multiple areas, particularly among Active youth, no differences were found between YI participants and comparison students during this academic year.

The results found here are something of an anomaly for the program, given its' solid record on improving academic performance. It may prove beneficial for staff to consider whether there were structural program changes that may have contributed to the

lack of findings or if some youth or youth cohorts may need additional academic and/or personal supports to be more successful educationally. It may also be helpful to integrate more content, both in the summer and year-round program, related to improving educational attitudes since more positive attitudes have been linked to better academic performance (Erkman, Caner, Sart, Borkan & Sahan, 2010; McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Pershey, 2010; Suldo, Shaffer & Shaunessy, 2008). Also providing workshops or individual advisement on the importance of maintaining good grades and school attendance since they both can influence future educational and career choices may prove useful.

### References

- Erkman, F., Caner, A., Sart, H., Borkan, B., & Sahan, K. (2010). Influence of perceived teacher acceptance, self-concept, and school attitude on the academic achievement of school-age children in Turkey. *Cross-Cultural Research, 44*, 295-309.
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