



Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board

Established 1985

Since 1985, the Youth Coordinating Board has served as the central inter-governmental organization dedicated to promoting the healthy, comprehensive development of Minneapolis children and youth through collaborative action and policy alignment.

The YCB was created through a state-authorized joint powers agreement between the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minneapolis Public Library Board, and the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners. The YCB is governed by a thirteen-member board of elected officials representing the partners, as well as a Minneapolis member from both the Minnesota House of Representatives and State Senate, and the 4th Judicial District.

The governmental partners of the YCB collaborate to sponsor the Minneapolis Youth Congress, a representative body of 55 youth members which has influence in decisions and policies that affect youth. Members are students between 8th and 12th grades and come from across the city representing the diversity of Minneapolis. The Minneapolis Youth Congress works in collaboration with elected officials, focusing on a common understanding of, and potential solutions for, youth concerns. The Minneapolis Youth Congress has set forward its top six areas for input and action – education, safety, transportation, housing, employment, and health. These serve as the framework for the YCB's legislative priorities: Early Childhood Education, Closing the Achievement Gap, Out of School Time, and Youth Violence Prevention.

Early Childhood Education

All Minneapolis children enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Throughout Minnesota and the nation policymakers, educators and community leaders recognize quality, accessible early childhood education as a key to closing the achievement gap. Countless studies and Minneapolis' own "500 Under 5" program have demonstrated that children exposed to a "nurturing, stimulating environment in the first five years of life achieve higher results in elementary and secondary education." Through the *Children and Youth Report Card*, the Youth Coordinating Board has established success in school for youth of all ages as one of its central priorities. The path to this success begins in early childhood, and the first step is access to enrichment opportunities for all Minneapolis children. The YCB supports:

- Quality standards for early childhood programs;
- Increased access to quality learning opportunities; and
- Providing parents with resources and information.

Every Child College Ready - Close the Achievement Gap

All Minneapolis children and youth succeed in school

Although the performance of Minnesota students on standardized test scores and their rates of graduation are among the highest in the nation, the educational outcomes for far too many African American, Latino and Native American youth are not good. In fact, the educational achievement gap between white students and students of color in Minnesota is among the largest in the nation. Educational disparities have a lifelong effect, limiting an individual's access to higher education and future earning potential. They also contribute to poorer health outcomes, family instability, and low voter and civic participation. In a shared effort to close the achievement gap and enable every student in Minneapolis to be college ready, the YCB supports:

- The "New Minnesota Miracle" Education Finance reform proposal brought forward by PS Minnesota.
- Early literacy programs such as Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Kindergarten Plus that seek to close the "school readiness gap" and help low income students begin school on a more firm foundation.

- Increased investments in Extended Day programs so students can participate in both after school and summer school learning opportunities.
- Expansion of initiatives such as the Minneapolis Promise, that include career and college centers in high schools, summer jobs programs and college access for low income students.
- Policies that reduce barriers and increase access to educational opportunities for all Minneapolis youth.

Out of School Time

All Minneapolis children and youth have access to quality out of school time opportunities.

Children and youth who consistently participate in quality out of school time opportunities experience positive outcomes for years to come. Adolescence is a time of crucial brain development. The experiences young people have during these formative years help foster critical life skills and establish the values, attitudes and judgment necessary to transition successfully into adulthood. Youth who participate in quality out of school time programs experience higher graduation rates, increased school attendance, and improved relationships with peers, teachers and family.

The YCB has a long history of linking youth and their families to positive out of school time experiences that provide young people with safe spaces, opportunities for positive relationships with caring adults and interesting activities to engage them in their communities. The YCB now works to advance policies that increase awareness, quality and access to such programs. The YCB supports:

- The Youth Community Connections (YCC) After School Alliance initiative to extend the “Afterschool Community Learning Opportunities Act” which includes:
 - Expanded out of school time community learning opportunities;
 - Increased state funding and using this commitment to leverage private resources for out of school time learning opportunities;
 - Studying youth transportation needs in Minnesota;
 - Assessing the state of out of school time learning opportunities in Minnesota; and
- Diverse employment opportunities for youth and young adults.

Youth Violence Prevention

All Minneapolis children and youth are prepared for the opportunities and challenges of adolescence and adulthood.

The most efficient and effective way to prevent youth violence is to invest in quality early childhood education and positive out of school time enrichment opportunities. A lack of healthy, constructive experiences and relationships can lead many young people to make poor decisions that can negatively impact themselves and their community. The Youth Coordinating Board recognizes that youth violence is a preventable public health epidemic that requires a holistic, multi-faceted response.

Addressing this issue through the lens of public health means that the YCB believes that no single strategy prevents youth violence. Rather, youth violence prevention requires a long-term commitment to a comprehensive set of strategies. The YCB supports:

- Establishing competitive grant funds for existing state or local mentoring partnerships to increase the number of mentors statewide;
- Aligning existing state resources to fund prevention and intervention programs that address youth violence and associated risk factors including but not limited to teen pregnancy prevention;
- Maintaining state and federal workforce funding and policies to employ at-risk youth and youth reentering the community from the criminal justice system;
- Establishing a state policy that defines youth violence as a public health issue that can be prevented by drawing on public health methodologies used to address other acute health concerns;
- Support policies that help local law enforcement track illegal guns and restrict the access of young people to illegal guns.