



YOUTH HEARTS SPEAK

By the youth of Project READY

Project READY (Reconnecting, Educating, Achieving Dreams for Youth) is a project of Huckleberry Youth Services that provides support to eighth grade students with significant behavior and/or truancy challenges throughout their eighth grade year to ensure their success and develop a positive transition into high school. Services provided include case management focused on social-emotional and academic improvement, parent engagement/parent education, therapeutic services, academic support and interventions, and a sixteen-week social-emotional

group.

As part of Project READY, youth participate in a sixteen-week group focused on building community, trust, and rapport. For eight of those weeks, we partnered with The Beat Within at our school sites, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School and Willie Brown Jr. Middle School, to create a project that highlights our youth's stories, truths, and gives them a creative experience with writing.

Learn more about Project READY at

<https://www.huckleberryyouth.org/juvenile-justice-diversion>

NOTES FROM OUR PROJECT READY COUNSELORS

We noticed in group that the youth always had a lot to say about their neighborhoods, school or daily lives. So we wanted to have an open space where that could help them express themselves in different ways, such as in writing or drawing. I'm excited to see all the amazing pieces from our youth and I'm proud of them taking a risk and trying something new.

-Patsy

When we first talked about putting together a magazine as our project for group this semester, lots of youth were unsure about doing writing as an activity. Writing is something we do lots of in school and can have lots of 'rules' around how it should look. In spite of being unsure at first, lots of the youth have worked to contribute something to the magazine, whether that was through their own writing, talking to an adult who could help them with the writing, drawing or sharing general ideas. The finished magazine is a great mix of different voices and stories. It's a pleasure to see it all come together.

-Antonia

Doing this unique project put into perspective how essential it is for youth to have a space to speak their truths without judgment or criticism. Writing has such a stigma attached to it because of their experiences with it in school but I hope we were able to introduce a new experience with writing that brought self-reflection and affirmation. I'm grateful for each of the youth perspectives, time, effort, risk and courage to go through this journey.

-Kisai

"My mom's house feels like home because my mom lives there and I have a room."



HUCKLEBERRY



YOUTH PROGRAMS

SAFETY • HEALTH • JUSTICE • EDUCATION

YOUTH HEARTS SPEAK

By the youth of Project READY

Change is Coming

Something that has changed in my life is that when I was a baby I was left handed but once I grew up I started writing with my right hand.

Something that's going to change soon, in a couple of months is going from middle school to high school. That's going to be a big change because I'm going to go to a new school and make new friends.

-Roses

Thoughts on School

I'm in Eighth grade at Willie Brown Middle School. I've been attending since the sixth grade. Now that I am graduating, one thing I like about this school is that we get our first pick to any high school. My first pick is Lincoln High School. Not all middle schools in San Francisco get this opportunity. The reason, I believe, it because we are a STEM

School, which means we are a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math school.

When I go to high school I want to learn Japanese and Spanish, plus go to a school with good language arts. Their language and their culture is interesting to me. I have always wanted to learn a foreign language and I know Lincoln teaches Japanese.

At this point, I have never learned a foreign language and I want to be able to speak other languages so I can be a translator. I want a successful career to teach others and work in the government as a translator.

I want to travel the world! I want to go to Australia. They have the largest out-back in the world! I also want to go to the Philippines, because I have Filipino in my blood. I also want to travel to Japan!

I really want to go to college too. College means better opportunities. I want a college that will support my dreams and goals.

When I look back on middle school it was easy and hard. The biggest lesson I can share with others is that as a student we must learn to go with the flow, do your work, and do your best to not feel any pressure from others. If I could do anything over again when it comes to middle school, I would take math more serious. I messed up when I was struggling with some personal issues. As I move forward I need to think of the consequences first, and since I didn't my math suffered.

My goal is to be more focused going into ninth grade. Thank you.

-Young R

Family

Sundays we go to dinner at a restaurant to eat pho and get boba. Celebrating, hanging out with my family brings us closer, like my baby cousin Evan, my Dad's birthday and uncle's birthday.

-The Great

A Time I Experienced Change

We were talking about changing schools twice, from elementary to middle then to high school. I was scared of moving from elementary to middle school. It was better than I thought though, I like being in a bigger school with older kids and there's more activities to do.

-CO

A Favorite Memory

A favorite memory is when my parents and I went to the mall together. I think it was a few weeks ago: we went to Serramonte and we shopped together. I felt more close to them since I go to school and they work. It was fun because me and my dad were making jokes to make my mom laugh. When we got home we ate dinner and I went to take a shower, and then went to sleep. I'm also really happy because it was Sunday the next day.

-Ale

Being Different or Blending In

In time I wanted to blend in.

I wanted to fit in the trend and be like others.

Times came where I knew it wasn't my style.

I kind of changed myself up but still fit the trend.

Once I got older I didn't want to fit in. I want to be different.

I changed my ways. I found a different me.

I cared how people thought of me before.

Now people's opinions of me don't matter to me.

I'm still going to be me.

-L

Home

Home I think is a place where you feel comfortable.

Where you feel safe.

Where you don't even doubt that you're okay.

I feel at home in my room.

It's my space and nobody else's.

I feel at home with my friends.

When I'm with them I know it'll be okay.

I know I'm home with people who care for me.

Lastly, I feel at home with my mother.

With her was my first home.

She reminds me of our old home,

where we lived and suffered together.

-R

Assumptions

Everyone makes assumptions about things, that's just how people are.

People see a guy that might be more "feminine" and assume they're gay.

People see a girl that's more "manly" then they think they're lesbian.

Whenever you meet someone they're probably making assumptions the whole time.

When people see me they think I'm a girl and most think I'm lesbian.

People assume things about other people most of the time unconsciously.

Most don't mean it to be offensive or rude, but a lot of the time it's just that.

I am in fact a boy, though no one knows. And I'm bisexual, but more on the gay side.

To the world I'm a girl and just because I don't wear normally "girly" things everyone always asks if I'm a lesbian. It always hurts just a little whenever someone asks me that but they'll never know why.

-Luca

Me

I am black.

I am outgoing.

I am intelligent.

I am happy.

-D

Thoughts on Changes

I started playing Dungeons and Dragons. It opened creativity.

I'm still in a house but it's not really my home. I'm never had a home. That's all.

-Laughing Stok

By the youth of Project READY

YOUTH HEARTS SPEAK**More Than One Home**

Somewhere I feel at home is my nana's house and my mom's house. I feel more at home at my nana's because I lived there for a while when I was younger, and my brothers (uncles) live there. My mom's house feels like home because my mom lives there and I have a room. My small dog lives there and also my other dog that is six years old. Those are the two places I feel at home and comfortable at.

-Roses**Muni Stories**

One day me and my friends were on the bus on the way to the mall. This lady got on the bus and she was mad, looked like she was crying, so we asked her if she was okay.

The lady responded, "Yea, are you okay!?" My friends and I said "You don't have to say it like that!" Then my friends called her a shhh. Then she called us the same.

Then the lady said "Your mom is a shhh." Then my friends got up and said "What did you say about my mom?" The lady then went to the bus driver to tell him to stop the bus and call the police.

The lady started being racist and asked "Where is your green card?"

And we said, "Green card? Get the hell out of here!" We ended up getting off at the next stop.

-Light**Shoots Dice**

I've been shooting dice for a few years, I started in sixth grade.

I played in school but I play everywhere.

I'm a lucky person, too. I never lose.

My best day I made one-hundred and fifty dollars.

Playing a dice game, you have to have confidence to the point where

I'm a shhh-talker. My mom doesn't want me to play

and my stepdad laced me on how to shoot.

Shooting dice helps me in math class.

I know numbers like the back of my hand.

I can't shoot dice in high school.

I'm going to Washington HS.

It was my first choice, I found out Monday.

I need to visit the school. I know a lot of people going.

I'm worried about the school work and I don't like homework.

My dream is to be a lawyer for youth, a good lawyer because I think they send youth to juvenile hall for no reason.

-Tellybo**My Safe Place**

I feel at home in my home. In my home I go on Netflix. When I'm at home I am comfortable that is why I feel at home in my house.

-Luz**Change**

One change that I'm looking forward to is the change of becoming myself.

I have been looking forward to that change for years.

The thought of it makes me so happy.

In high school, I'm going to be me.

-Luca**That Change**

When I was born I eventually was able to walk on my own.

That change that I didn't want to happen was my first fight in MLK. I didn't want that to happen. People started bullying me and I got into more fights.

-The Great**When Change Comes**

"How do you feel about getting into School of the Arts? I feel really juiced and excited for you...it's a HUGE accomplishment!"

"Inside my head there's a room where I'm trashing it."

"Because you're excited?"

"Yes! When I'm excited and when I'm mad I do the same thing... I guess it's how I deal with things."

-Laughing Stok**My Pet**

At home I have a fish, a lizard and a cat. The cat is called Shiloh and she gets scared easily. She's cuddly with us though. She's scared of our new couch and the vacuum. She doesn't like the neighbors talking and uses people. When she gets scared she sheds her hair a lot. She likes to be lazy and only does things when she feels like it. She's stubborn with her food, like she sometimes licks the sauce off her cat food and leaves the rest. She loves the treats we give her. She's an inside cat and that's how she'll always be.

-CO**Loved Ones**

When me and my older cousins were really close I would always go to her house. But one day we got in a really big argument so we just stopped talking for a while and my other cousin stopped talking to me too because me and her older sister got in the argument. That changed things a lot because we used to talk every day, we used to go everywhere together and we just stopped talking.

-Roses**Truth**

I don't like the way teachers talk to students, they act like they own us as kids.

-D**I Feel**

I feel home is my computer because I'm happy. I play it every day and make a shop there and sell stuff in game.

-The Great**Come and Go**

When my friend transferred to schools that was a change for me. We started hanging out for two years, we were so close sixth grade and seventh but then she had to transfer because she lived far away. Now we are not close.

-Luz

YOUTH HEARTS SPEAK

By the youth of Project READY

That Change

A big change in my life has been with my family. When I was little, my sister's and my parents all lived together. Now my sisters have a family. When my first sister moved out it was really sad for me because she used to play with me all the time.

Time passed and my second sister moved out. Now it's only me and my parents. I had to help even more around the house to help my parents. This made me realize that even if I get used to something I have to be prepared for big changes.

Like going to high school, it's a really big change and I'm nervous because I want to do good in high school so I can go to UCLA. To achieve that I need to stop getting to school late and getting low grades. Everything changes. I have to be prepared for life.

-Ale

School Daze

Sometimes I like going to school because it's entertaining because of all the drama. People start drama which is kind of dumb. Not my friends, other people. People start fights or they're disruptive in class. I don't start stuff, I just watch.

-Yolo

Feeling Different

Video games make me feel different from other people. When someone is better than me they tend to flex under the lower levels like me.

-The Great

Becoming Closer

Playing a videogame brings all my friends together. Dungeon Quest, a multi-player game that needs teamwork. I showed it to my brother and friends online. It was the first game, we played together. All my friends play it now.

-The Great

Home

I am not alone. I live with my mom and dad. Home is at my house. The reason that makes it home is because I'm fortunate and I feel safe and comfortable.

-TQ

Different

Everyone is going to be different because we all are different people. The only time I would "blend" in is if I am around other Black people.

I haven't found anyone like me, so I always stand out.

-B

Safe

I feel safe anywhere because I'm a Queen
Home is anywhere I lay my head.

-B

Football and Me

I play American football. I've been playing since I was four years old. I follow NFL every day.

I played with the East Bay Warriors five to nine years old, I also played with the Atlanta Ducks from ten to twelve years old, then I moved to SF and I played with the Bombers in the city.

I play flag football now. I play for Willie Brown Warriors, our colors are orange and black. It's okay, but I'd rather hit. I play rusher and tight end.

I want to play in high school too, at Lincoln.

I'm number twenty-six like Saquon Barkley, Le'veon Bell, Travis Kelce, George Kittle.

My brother turned me on to Football. He played at Emeryville HS, he got a scholarship to Nebraska. He tore his ACL last year but he's playing this year. He transferred to Michigan. His name is Adrian Lucy, number five, he's a receiver and punt returner. I've seen him play in Nebraska, He played against Arkansas. My brother is a third year, he's twenty-two years old. I think he's good enough to play the NFL. I think next year he'll try out Combine in Indiana.

The college I want to go to is Michigan or Oregon University.

My brother gets on me because I get in trouble. We are hella close. He tells me I need to get the grades, workout, lose fifteen to twenty pounds before freshman year.

This year I didn't play, I'm getting ready for high school.

-King

Becoming Closer

I'm close to my mom and my brother because I can talk to them about anything. It's also because they are my family.

-Yolo

Simple Things

I feel hella happy when I'm home, playing PS4 and chillin, playing music and I play PS4 with my sister.

-Titan

I Feel Most at Home

I feel most at home in my basement. It's where I spend the most time. All my stuff is there - my computer, a TV, a PlayStation, a bathroom, my cat stays down there, her name is Shiloh.

It was my mom's old room a long time ago, but then she moved upstairs. There's also a door to the outside. Sometimes I sleep there in the summer, when it's cold. It's literally a garage, a laundry room and a basement.

My friends are also my home because sometimes I don't feel like going home.

-CO

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to Willie Brown Jr. Middle School and Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School teachers, school support staff and administration for partnering with us. We couldn't do this creative endeavor without your love and support!

Thank you to David and Simone from The Beat Within for partnering with us! I believe we created an experience the youth will always remember and offer a safer space for them to be vulnerable and speak their truths.