

***FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF YOUTHTRUTH--  
FINAL REPORT***

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Prepared for:

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

*The goal of YouthTruth is to demonstrate the power of comparative feedback from students – the ultimate beneficiaries of school improvement efforts – and to create insights that will enable school, education, and foundation leaders to increase their effectiveness and impact.*

*--Center for Effective Philanthropy YouthTruth  
Project Overview for Participating High Schools  
(2010)*

*High school kids really want to know that they are asked for their opinions and are being listened to.*

*--YouthTruth high school principal (2010)*

#### 1.1 Background

This report has been prepared to provide the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) staff with an independent third-party formative evaluation of the YouthTruth project.

The project grew out of a broader commitment of BMGF leaders to develop processes for hearing directly, in “meaningful, rigorous, and actionable” ways, from those whose lives the Foundation and its partners are trying to serve. YouthTruth represents an effort to apply this approach to the BMGF objective of education reform that enables all people – especially those with the fewest resources – to have equal access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school.<sup>1</sup>

YouthTruth was developed in 2008 in a collaborative effort by the BMGF and the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP), a national non-profit organization that has pioneered the development of constituent perception reports for many of America’s leading foundations. CEP is perhaps best known for its Grantee Perception Report, which has been used by more than 200 foundations, including the BMGF. YouthTruth was developed in 2008 and, as noted in Exhibit 1-1 below, has been implemented in 86 charter, STEM, early college, small, theme, and urban high schools in ten states.<sup>2</sup>

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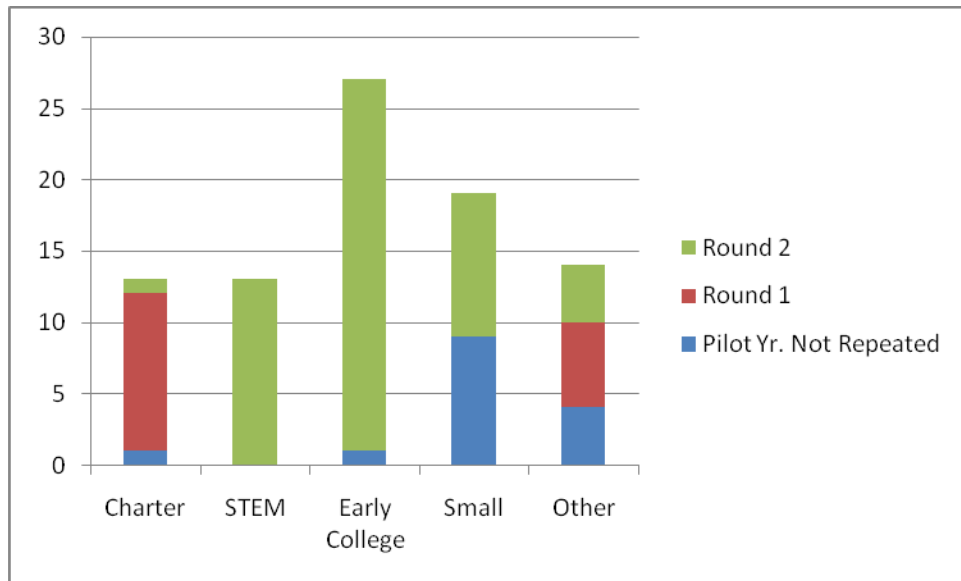
<sup>1</sup> Some of the material in this section of the report has been adapted from materials provided by the BMGF.

<sup>2</sup> There have been two phases of YouthTruth implementation thus far. There were 20 high schools in the YouthTruth pilot year (2008-09), 66 new schools in the 2009-2010 school year, and six repeating schools in 2009-2010, yielding a total of 86.

As now constituted, YouthTruth incorporates a survey of student perceptions<sup>3</sup>, a comprehensive report summarizing and disaggregating a school’s results, a suggested set of procedures for implementing the survey in high schools, a format for providing feedback to school leaders on the results of the survey, and a series of efforts by CEP to support school leaders’ efforts to use the data to plan school improvement. These opportunities include a one hour phone consultation with CEP staff and end-of-project conferences (called “convenings”) in which CEP staff discuss results with groups of school leaders and offer them opportunities to share results with their counterparts in nearby schools. Over the past year, CEP has also begun to create network-level reports that it shares with participating networks or districts which compare and analyze results across their participating schools.

**Exhibit 1-1**

**OVERVIEW OF YOUTHTRUTH SCHOOLS BY TYPE AND PARTICIPATION**



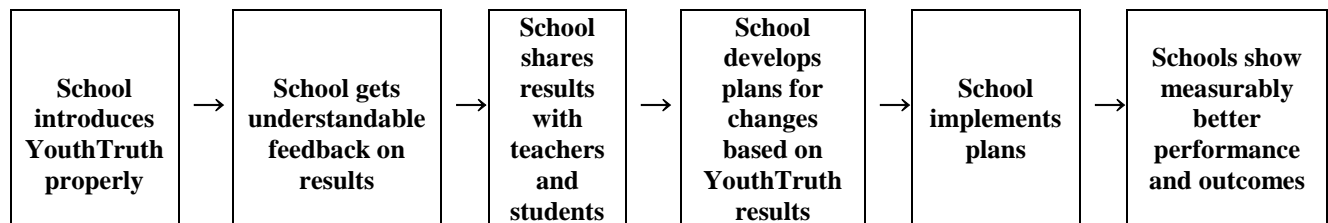
<sup>3</sup> The YouthTruth survey includes closed-ended (multiple choice) and open-ended (fill-in-the-blanks) questions that cover a range of topics including student-adult relationships in schools, perceived rigor of class-work, perceptions about the “school climate,” and students’ future plans and goals.

## 1.2 Research Design and Methodology

The BMGF Request for Proposals to evaluate YouthTruth called for a “formative evaluation”, i.e., a study that gives its highest priority to providing feedback that can be used by program operators and funders to improve the program as it evolves. The goal was to provide timely feedback to guide the BMGF and CEP in planning for future YouthTruth activities. The Brandeis University approach to providing this information was designed to answer the four key research questions posed by staff at the BMGF:

- How and to what extent can student perceptual data be useful?
- How, to what extent, and in what ways do different actors use YouthTruth data to drive action?
- Do key actors perceive that actions taken in response to the YouthTruth process and data result in improvements at participating schools?
- What clues does the 2009-2010 school year experience offer us in terms of the potential for scaling this model?

The four research questions were, in turn, used to develop our conceptual framework for an in-depth examination of YouthTruth and its effect(s) on school change. We first developed a flow model of the intended functioning of YouthTruth in the schools incorporating the following steps: collection of correct data; data feedback to the schools; schools use of the data to plan change; schools implementation of planned changes; and improved student outcomes.



Based on this work, we developed a multi-pronged data collection and analysis strategy that included:

- A literature review on the relationship of student perceptions and school outcomes;
- Site visits to a set of 12 YouthTruth high schools in the spring and fall of 2010;
- Attendance at six end-of-school-year convenings of participating schools that were held in May and June of 2010, and focus groups with school leaders at each of the convenings;
- Follow-up telephone calls to the eight YouthTruth high schools visited in the spring in order to confirm and expand on data collected;
- Telephone interviews with representatives of six of the networks that participated in YouthTruth in 2009-2010;

- An internet-based survey of the principals and/or coordinators at all 86 high schools that had participated in YouthTruth during its first two years;
- A reporting and communication approach that emphasized ongoing formative feedback as the study progressed; and
- Both qualitative and quantitative research analyses.

### Methodology for Our Review of the Literature

We began our study design work with an extensive literature review to support the evaluation and further development of YouthTruth in two ways:

- We reviewed the literature on the relationship between student perceptions of school climate/culture and school performance in order to provide a context for the research findings that would emerge from our own study, and
- We interviewed researchers who had designed, implemented, and utilized the results of other student perception surveys in order to understand why others had used the approaches that they did, and hence to explore the feasibility and desirability of alternatives to the approaches taken by YouthTruth.

We then prepared a short paper that focused on three areas: lessons learned from others who have designed and utilized similar surveys; content of the YouthTruth survey (e.g., are there any important concepts that are left out, or which can be measured in more effective ways); and the results of recent studies that explore relationships between student perceptions and the academic outcomes in schools.

### Highlights of Our Review of the Literature

The results of our review of the literature were presented in a separate report to the BMGF. The highlights of these results are presented below.

Our review identified a number of major challenges to effective administration of student perception surveys and utilization of their results. Issues related to the training of those who administer the surveys, promoting buy-in among school leadership and students, and ease of access to and use of information were central. Perhaps most critically, our review suggested that it is often unclear whether and to what degree students tend to provide accurate and truthful responses to survey questions on topics such as those on YouthTruth.

The review also led to us to conclude that schools vary in the degree to which they make good use of data as a mechanism to promote school improvement. Thus, simply providing schools with data is not enough to guarantee that meaningful change will take place. Rather, both the review and our own research suggest that if change is to be promoted and implemented, schools need to understand the data in student surveys, explore its potential for improved student outcomes, and have the capacity and motivation to use the data as inputs into systematic

planning processes to promote change. There are also issues relating to the availability of technology in schools, and the necessary resources to undertake these types of surveys in a cost-effective manner. Perhaps most obviously, it is difficult, if not impossible, to administer on-line surveys to all students in schools with limited access to computers for their students.

The findings from our literature review support many of the premises underlying YouthTruth. Most notably, they suggest that creating a positive school environment for students can be influential in fostering the development of academic success, safety and health outcomes, and the preparation of students as active and engaged citizens. The literature also shows that schools that embrace a culture of mutual support, respect, cooperation, and collaboration often provide a foundation for many types of student success. Social relationships among students and teachers, for example, make a difference regarding a wide range of outcomes. In addition, a positive sense of school belonging and connectedness appears to influence a range of students' socio-emotional development, violence, bullying and sexual harassment, and risk behaviors.

### Site Visit Methodology

The goal of the site visits was to obtain in-depth portraits of the ways that schools became involved with YouthTruth, how they chose to introduce and administer YouthTruth, how they used the data, and the extent to which the YouthTruth process has led to changes in the participating schools. Each site visit included individual or group interviews with school principals, YouthTruth coordinators, and teachers. In addition to this, we conducted one or more focus groups with students at each school, ranging from a minimum of five students to as many as several dozen. We also talked with school district and network leaders to place the school-level efforts in a broader context.

The twelve schools that we visited were selected through a purposive sampling process developed with input and feedback from the BMGF and CEP staff. Our overall goal was to have a mix of sites from the pilot year and the 2009-2010 school year that reflected the diversity in types of schools who participated in YouthTruth (e.g., charter, STEM, early college), and geography. Appendix A provides a listing of the site visit schools and how they fit into the categories in our sampling plan.

The twelve site visit schools cover all of the major types of schools that have participated in YouthTruth and are roughly representative of all 86 sites in terms of such easily measured school descriptors as school size, proportion of students on free or reduced price lunch, and proportion of students who are English Language Learners. Since our spring 2010 site visits took place shortly after schools had received their YouthTruth results, we conducted follow-up telephone calls to these schools in late September and early October in order to update our results.

### Survey Methodology

In addition to the site visits to twelve schools, we also developed surveys for the principals and YouthTruth coordinators at all high schools that participated in YouthTruth in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. The surveys were based, in large part, on the findings from our initial site visits to YouthTruth schools, discussions with leaders in the field, and our review of the literature.

The surveys were designed to collect information regarding principals' and coordinators' experience with the YouthTruth implementation process, their schools' use of the YouthTruth feedback data provided to them by CEP, the helpfulness of the data in understanding the strengths and issues to be addressed at the school, and the nature and status of the school changes that were planned or underway. We worked with the BMGF and CEP staff on the design of the surveys, in part to ensure that were not duplicative of data already collected by CEP.

The Brandeis surveys of YouthTruth high schools were administered in May and June of 2010 to all schools that had utilized YouthTruth one or more times during the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years. We utilized an online survey methodology. Useful information was received from 69 principals (80% of the total participating YouthTruth schools) and 31 coordinators (70% of the total YouthTruth schools that appointed a teacher to be the YouthTruth coordinator to assist the principal), resulting in one or more responses from 76 of the 86 schools that had utilized YouthTruth (88%).<sup>4</sup> A copy of the basic survey instrument used for principals who served as YouthTruth coordinators can be found in Appendix C to this report.

### **1.3 Overview of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

As discussed in some detail in the remainder of this report, we have concluded that YouthTruth has been designed and implemented in a high quality fashion, has already contributed to some changes in school activities, and is likely to result in more in the future.

The highlights of our findings include the following:

- Participating high school leaders overwhelmingly believe that YouthTruth has been valuable for their schools;
- School leaders believe that the methods that have been used to introduce YouthTruth to students have been effective in eliciting honest responses;
- School leaders report that they understand the contents of the YouthTruth feedback reports and have begun using them to plan school change;
- Feedback to teachers and students has been uneven; and
- It is too soon to tell whether many of the planned changes will be implemented and whether the implemented changes will bring about demonstrable improvements in school outcomes.

Overall, our findings suggest that there is a high potential of going to scale with YouthTruth if several challenges can be met. First, more needs to be done to document demand for YouthTruth

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<sup>4</sup> We recently discovered that one high school had appointed a student to serve as YouthTruth coordinator to assist in introducing YouthTruth to students and arranging for administration of the YouthTruth survey. As noted in later chapters, we consider this a "best practice", but this student was not included in the survey because we did not have contact information for this student when we conducted the survey.



in large urban high schools and in both schools and networks that have limited prior associations with the BMGF.

Second, procedures should be put in place to insure consistent fidelity to steps necessary to fully implement the YouthTruth model, especially ensuring active feedback to and involvement of students and teachers.

Third, steps should be taken to demonstrate that planned changes in YouthTruth high schools are in fact put into place and eventually translated into improved outcomes. It would therefore be useful to identify means, mechanisms, and approaches to increase the likelihood that these outcomes do in fact occur.

Fourth, viable financial avenues to support program expansion must be identified. YouthTruth is now offered free of charge to participating schools. But it is widely agreed that the program can not continue to grow without additional funding support beyond the BMGF commitment, be it at the national, state, and/or local levels.

Our study did not address the costs of administering YouthTruth. But it has documented a wide range of positive changes that have already occurred in the participating schools. Additional positive changes will occur if ongoing planning processes bear fruit. Thus, if funds are available to support the effort, we have no hesitation recommending continued expansion of YouthTruth at the same time that steps are taken to improve and better document the ways that schools conduct YouthTruth and utilize the YouthTruth survey results.

Our other recommendations include the following:

- Taking steps to gain more experience with YouthTruth in large urban high schools;
- Developing mechanisms and tools to increase support for high schools in planning to implement YouthTruth and utilize its results to promote meaningful school change;
- Taking steps to insure that high schools fully implement all aspects of the YouthTruth approach;
- Utilizing YouthTruth data to develop standards for school performance;
- Promoting repeated utilization of YouthTruth to assess impact on schools;
- Taking additional steps to document the longer-term impact of YouthTruth on high school operations and outcomes; and
- Devoting a high priority to current efforts to develop a YouthTruth business model.

#### **1.4 Organization of this Report**

Our analysis of the processes by which YouthTruth has been implemented can be found in

Chapter Two of the report. Chapter Three contains an assessment of the effectiveness of YouthTruth by school leaders and others. Chapter Four focuses on the extent to which changes in school structure, functioning, and outcomes have already occurred, and Chapter Five contains a summary of our findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the future of YouthTruth.

## Chapter Two

### ANALYSIS OF APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENTING YOUTHTRUTH IN THE PARTICIPATING HIGH SCHOOLS

*I didn't have time to do anything more than what we did in the assembly[in terms of introducing YouthTruth to the students].  
--YouthTruth coordinator (2010)*

*Administering YouthTruth was relatively easy. It was over in a couple of days.  
--YouthTruth leader in a relatively small school (2010)*

*Administering YouthTruth was an incredibly daunting administrative task.  
--YouthTruth leader in a large school (2010)*

#### **2.1 Introduction and Overview**

The approaches used to implement YouthTruth varied to some degree from the pilot year (2008-2009) and past year (2009-2010) and from school to school within each of the years. However, the vast majority of high school principals reported that the approaches that were used in their schools were effective in explaining the purposes of the study to students and motivating them to take the survey seriously. As discussed in further detail in Chapters Three and Four, we find no clear relationship between the method of implementing YouthTruth and the degree to which YouthTruth has been seen as helpful. Therefore we conclude that there is no one best way to promote implementation.

Many of the schools did not meet the YouthTruth expectations in terms of providing systematic feedback to students, teachers, and other professionals in the school such as counselors. This is an area that warrants priority attention in the future.

#### **2.2 Reasons for High Schools to Get Involved in YouthTruth**

The twelve schools principals with whom we spoke gave a variety of answers to the question, “Why did you decide to participate in YouthTruth”. The concept of promoting student voice was attractive to most of them, but in many instances the specific reason that they cited as promoting their decision to participate reflected other issues. For example, at least eight agreed to participate because they were asked to do so by a representative of their school district or network and they wanted to be a “team player”. As one of them put it, “Our assistant superintendent ‘asked’ us to participate.” The fact that YouthTruth was being sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was also an important factor to many principals. As one of them put it, “We were not sure what was precisely being offered, but we know it was coming from the Gates Foundation, and we felt we needed to consider it.”

### 2.3 Approaches to Introducing Youth Truth to High School Students

During both years of YouthTruth, the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) prepared a range of materials and approaches that could be used to implement the program at participating high schools. During the pilot year, these included a number of tools that were designed to be used in assemblies, including a videotape presentation that featured an MTV personality, guest speakers, and hand-held devices that enabled students to “vote” in response to questions posed to them and see the results of the poll on screens. During the second year, schools received an updated video that included testimony from students in the previous year and talking points for principals to use in presenting the program.

**Best practice:**

*In one school, a student was given major responsibility for planning YouthTruth and going from classroom to classroom to introduce the survey and recruit volunteers. Students at the school told us that this contributed to the authenticity of the endeavor.*

As is shown in Exhibit 2-1 below, this general approach was followed in many cases. The majority of schools whose leaders completed our YouthTruth evaluation surveys reported that they introduced YouthTruth to their students through the assemblies, using the MTV video, and speeches from principals. However, as the exhibit makes clear, most schools used a variety of approaches, for example, combining an introduction in an assembly with follow-up in individual classrooms.

**Exhibit 2-1**

**METHODS USED BY SCHOOLS TO INTRODUCE YOUTHTRUTH\***  
(n=48)

METHOD OF INTRODUCTION	PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS
Assembly	62.5%
Individual classrooms	62.5%
Principal explains YouthTruth	62.5%
MTV video	52.1%
Classroom teachers	22.9%
Other	8.3%

\*Source: Brandeis survey of YouthTruth Principals and Coordinators

In the handful of pilot year schools we visited, there was a consensus that having the “clickers” where students gave real time answers and saw the results of questions right away was a very successful approach. As one principal told us, “The students really liked the clicker. Seeing the results right away really grabbed them.” This finding suggests that this approach should be considered in the future if resources permit.

**Best Practice:**

*In several small schools, the principal went from classroom to classroom to explain YouthTruth, using the MTV video*

For the most part, the principals and YouthTruth Coordinators reported that the methods that they chose to introduce YouthTruth were based upon the logistics of their schools and their beliefs about the best way to communicate the purpose and importance of YouthTruth to their students.

For example, the school leaders who did not utilize the general approach of using the MTV video in an assembly offered several reasons to explain their decisions, including, in some cases, the possibility of integrating it with classroom-based approaches.

Those who did not utilize assemblies gave a variety of reasons to explain this choice. In some cases, there was not enough space in the assembly hall to hold all students. In one school the principal told us that the video would draw too much attention to the survey and take away from a broader view of how the school would be using the results. School leaders often reported that it would be hard to maintain the attention of students in large assemblies and told us that discussions of YouthTruth in the smaller individual classroom setting would be more effective. In three of the twelve schools we visited, the principals personally went from classroom to classroom to demonstrate their personal commitment to YouthTruth, to communicate more directly with individual students, and to commit themselves to using the data that YouthTruth would produce to help make the school a better place for students.

In several schools we were told that the school leaders would have preferred the intimacy of talking with students about YouthTruth in individual classrooms, but time constraints made planning such an approach impossible. As two of them put it:

I would have liked to have the grouping for the assembly smaller for more intimacy, and to have the presentations have a more intimate relation to our students. But in a large school like this, doing it that would take a lot of time and we would have to spend a lot of time in order to organize it in a way that we could be sure that the teachers would know what we were doing and would be on board.

I preferred introducing YouthTruth in classrooms because kids pay attention better when they are in small groups.

As is documented in Appendix D to this report, the approaches used to introduce YouthTruth to students did not seem to vary systematically by the type of high school. However, as one would expect, the use of individual classrooms for this purpose was not seen as practical in the largest of the schools. As one principal in a large school told us, “If I were going to introduce YouthTruth by going from classroom to classroom, it would take my full attention for every day over two weeks!”

One idea that is worthy of consideration is adopting a modified approach for students with special needs. Thus in one school, the principal told us that they went through each question with groups of students who had cognitive difficulties.

Leaders of schools often mentioned how valuable it was when CEP staff came to help introduce YouthTruth. As one of them put it:

It was way better to have CEP do the introduction of YouthTruth. If they didn’t come out and help us do it, I don’t know how we could have gotten it done.

## **2.4 Approaches to Selecting Which Students to Participate in YouthTruth**

The agreements between CEP and the participating high schools called for a minimum of a 60% student participation rate and the overall response rates for YouthTruth were roughly 80% for each of the first two years of program implementation.

In many schools, efforts were made to survey all students. However, in some schools, the level of student participation was a reflection of the willingness of individual teachers to have their students participate. In others, decisions were made to insure that the students who participated were in a good position to do so. For example, in one school we were told that students who were not at the school for the entire period since startup that year were not surveyed. In another school that we visited, we were told that it was harder to get eleventh and twelfth graders to participate because their schedules were too busy. These differences in approach raise the issue of whether schools that participate in YouthTruth should be asked (or required) to utilize an approved sampling plan.

## **2.5 Approaches to Administering the YouthTruth Survey**

Our site visits to a dozen YouthTruth high schools showed that the approaches that the schools used in collecting YouthTruth data from students were dependent upon the availability and distribution of computers. In general, the YouthTruth surveys were administered in classrooms or computer labs, with manageable administrative burdens in terms of scheduling. In some cases, the surveys were administered immediately following the introduction of YouthTruth, but the typical pattern was to get it done shortly afterwards.

In several instances, we heard that the school leadership highly valued support from CEP, which sometimes sent staff to help introduce YouthTruth. In the pilot year, CEP arranged for mobile computer labs to be sent to one school to ease the administrative burden of allowing all participating students to gain access to the internet within the tight agreed-upon time frames.

Unsurprisingly, we heard that the complexity of administering YouthTruth within tight time periods was seen as greater in the large urban schools which often have staff that is stretched thinly. In one such school, a school leader called administering YouthTruth a “daunting task” that was only possible because the school had an intern training to be a principal who was given the responsibility of making YouthTruth happen. In another large school, the job of coordinating YouthTruth implementation was given to a team consisting of a student and a teacher. In this case, the student served not only as staff support providing time to help plan YouthTruth by going from classroom by classroom, but was also said to have been a wonderful spokesperson for the effort. In this role, the student helped to convince both teachers and other students that YouthTruth was a worthwhile and credible enterprise that could result in powerful benefits to the school.

A leader in a large school expressed this same point of view even more graphically, telling us that “the [YouthTruth] timeframe was monstrous for schools like ours.” A colleague pointed out that making sure that all teachers are on board adds considerably to the administrative burden.

## **2.6 Student Assessment of the YouthTruth Survey**

The overall student assessment of the YouthTruth survey was positive. For the most part, the students in our focus groups said the language of the YouthTruth surveys was clear and the formats easy to understand. While some suggested that the surveys were too long, most did not favor shortening them. Some believed that the open-ended questions made the survey much longer to fill out, but most said that the open-ended questions gave them an opportunity to express themselves in more detail than would have been possible if all the questions were simply multiple choice. They were pleased to learn that school leaders found the answers to open-ended questions to be highly valuable.

## **2.7 Perceived Effectiveness of Approaches to Introducing YouthTruth to Students**

The vast majority of the school leaders we spoke with in our site visits, and who participated in the Brandeis survey, believed that the approaches they utilized to introduce Youth Truth were effective in explaining the purposes of YouthTruth (97.9% of the survey respondents) and in motivating students to take the surveys seriously and answer the questions honestly (87.2%). Furthermore, as is shown in Exhibit 2-2 below, the responses do not appear to vary systematically by the specific types of approaches that were used. Perhaps most noteworthy, the proportion of school leaders who said that use of assemblies was effective for this purpose was very close to those who believed that introduction by teachers in classrooms was effective.

This opinion was echoed by the students who participated in the focus groups that we conducted at the twelve high schools in our site visit sample. There was a wide understanding of the purpose of YouthTruth—generally expressed as “allowing principals and teachers to see how we students see things”—and a feeling that the YouthTruth survey was taken more seriously than many of the other surveys that high school students routinely complete over the course of the school year.

However, in a few instances, students in our focus groups told us that they were not told about the purposes of YouthTruth and that it had simply been passed out to them and they were told to complete it. It is impossible for us to know whether this recollection—or absence of recollection—is accurate.

There were wide divisions of opinion about the effectiveness of the MTV video among the students, both within and across individual schools. In many cases, the presence of an MTV “veejay” was said to demonstrate that this was an important effort that went beyond individual schools. In others, students told us that this was “a typical effort by adults to make it seem like they were in touch with us.” On the other hand, there was wide support for the value of having students in schools who had used YouthTruth in the past tell about their experiences in the video. This was often said to promote students taking it more seriously and thus create more “buy in” to the concept of providing data that would be used for school improvements.

Exhibit 2-2

PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF METHOD OF INSTRUCTION  
USED BY SCHOOLS TO INTRODUCE YOUTHTRUTH\*

METHOD OF INTRODUCTION	EFFECTIVENESS OF METHOD OF INTRODUCING YOUTHTRUTH IN EXPLAINING THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY	EFFECTIVENESS OF METHOD OF INTRODUCING YOUTHTRUTH IN MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO TAKE THE SURVEY SERIOUSLY AND ANSWER QUESTIONS HONESTLY
	(n=47)	(n=47)
Assembly	100.0%	89.7%
Individual classrooms	96.7%	86.7%
MTV video	100.0%	84.0%
Principal	96.7%	83.3%
Classroom teachers	100.0%	90.9%
Other	100.0%	75.0%

\*Source: Brandeis survey of YouthTruth Principals and Coordinators

**2.8 Feedback to Students**

The YouthTruth approach was intended to be different from other surveys in that students were expected to get clear feedback on the results and how the school was using them. Interviews with school principals and YouthTruth coordinators and our focus groups with students make it clear that this was not happening on a regular basis in many of the high schools that utilized YouthTruth in its first two years. In a few cases, there was selected feedback to a few students. But only a handful of schools indicated that they had a system to provide systematic feedback to all students.

In many cases, school leaders have told us that their ability to plan and provide

systematic feedback to students was hampered by fact that they got the YouthTruth results back so late in the school year, at a time when the school was focusing on end-of-year exams.<sup>5</sup> In others,

**Best Practices:**

*In one school, school leaders plan to provide feedback on the results of the previous year's YouthTruth survey and the steps that have been taken to change the school as a result of the survey as an integral part of the efforts to introduce YouthTruth for the current school year.*

*In another school, the principal went from classroom discussing the results of YouthTruth with students who sat in a circle, exploring the extent to which the results mirrored student perceptions, and explaining how the results were being used to improve the school*

*One principal provided students with the questions from YouthTruth that she would be discussing with them the next day and asked them to take the questions home and think again about how they would answer them before she had the student feedback sessions.*

<sup>5</sup> As noted in the Appendix to this report, there was no consensus among school leaders about whether it would be better to administer YouthTruth earlier in the school year to accommodate more time for using the feedback in planning for school change. In several cases, we were told that early administration of YouthTruth would make it difficult for ninth graders to be around long enough to develop a good sense of their new schools.



we were told that the school leaders did not have sufficient time and ability to translate the YouthTruth feedback from CEP into student-friendly materials.<sup>6</sup> As one principal put it:

I think it is important for us to develop our own format for presenting the results to our students. We need to find ways to personalize it. CEP provides ideas on how to share with students, but I need to figure out how to do it in the way that works best for our school, and then do it in each classroom.

In one case, we were told that the YouthTruth results had been shared primarily with seniors who had already graduated by the time that we conducted our site visits and student focus groups.

But in any event, provision of feedback to students does not appear to have been a high priority for school leaders we met with. Very few of the students that we met with at the YouthTruth high schools have received any feedback on the survey results, and the exceptions to this rule seemed to be selected small groups of student leaders who were informed. Some students told us that they expected to hear about the results of the survey but had not received the information. This occurred despite the fact that the students remembered that they had been told that they would be getting such feedback, which, in turn diminished the intended perception that “YouthTruth is different”. As one student put it, “They never share the results of surveys with us, and YouthTruth was no exception.”

Moreover, the absence of feedback made it impossible for students to see for themselves that their opinions had in fact led to changes in the school, thereby eliminating the intended objective of allowing students to see that their feedback had been a powerful promoter of school change.

***Best practice:***

***In one school, there was a planning process in which one group of teachers reviewed YouthTruth results, other groups reviewed other surveys and school performance data, and the results were combined as part of an integrated planning process that has already resulted in several curricular changes.***

The Brandeis survey of YouthTruth school leaders paints a much more positive picture of the extent to which YouthTruth results have been shared with teachers and students than our twelve site visits. As shown in Exhibit 2-3 below, however, even the surveys suggest that the results had not yet been shared with most students in nearly half the schools.

Thus, it seems clear that if the BMGF and CEP wish to insure that this important component of the YouthTruth model is fully implemented, further steps will be necessary. Options for consideration include changing the timing of the YouthTruth survey—and length of time it takes to provide feedback to schools—as well as other steps to help schools plan this kind of feedback and make it clear that it is a requirement that schools do so.

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<sup>6</sup> CEP has provided schools with brief formats for student reports but they were not often viewed as sufficient to develop a report that could be shared with the students at the schools. Moreover, principals typically told us that they needed to do more to personalize the way results are to be presented in order to fit in with the needs and sophistication level of their students.

**Exhibit 2-3**

**EXTENT TO WHICH SCHOOL LEADERS SHARED YOUTHTRUTH RESULTS WITH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS\***

EXTENT SHARED	SCHOOL COMMUNITY MEMBERS	
	Teachers (n=53)	Students (n=51)
All	64.2%	27.5%
Most	15.1%	25.5%
Some	18.9%	31.4%
None	1.9%	15.7%

\* Source: Brandeis survey of YouthTruth principals and coordinators (2010).

**2.9 Feedback to Teachers and Other School Staff**

There was a good deal of variation in the extent and manner in which the reports on YouthTruth survey results were shared with the teachers and other staff at the participating high schools. In some of the schools we visited, there had been relatively minimal sharing, with plans in place to incorporate the feedback to teachers in planning for the coming school year, in sessions that would take place in the summer. For example, in one school, the principal sent an email to his teachers with a summary of the most important results. In others, there were informal procedures such as posting the results on the room of a teachers' lunchroom and inviting comments on implications of the results for improving the educational process in the school. In still other schools, the YouthTruth results were more formally integrated into planning sessions for future school changes.

***Best practice:***

***In one school, there was a planning process in which one group of teachers reviewed YouthTruth results, other groups reviewed other surveys and school performance data, and the results were combined as part of an integrated planning process.***

While feedback to teachers has been less of a problem than feedback to students, we believe it is also worthy of further attention.

**2.10 The Role of Networks in Administering YouthTruth**

During the pilot year, the implementation of YouthTruth was carried out by CEP and the participating schools. In 2009-2010, CEP began working with school districts and other networks of schools to develop a more localized approach in which participating schools could learn from each other. Exhibit 2-4 lists the networks and numbers of participating school in 2009-2010.

Our interviews with school leaders and network officials make it clear that these networks played an important, but limited role in 2009-2010, focusing mostly on recruitment of schools to participate in YouthTruth and sponsoring the follow-up convening. The network leaders generally told us that the schools that participated in YouthTruth benefitted greatly from this, and there were often benefits to the other schools in their network and the networks as a whole. This was true because the challenges that YouthTruth put in the spotlight were also believed to be present in many of the other network schools as well. In some instances, the network “coaches”

Exhibit 2-4

NETWORKS PARTICIPATING IN YOUTHTRUTH\*

NETWORK	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
Atlanta Public Schools	15
The Leona Group, L.L.C. – Arizona region	10
North Carolina New Schools Project	39
Ohio STEM Learning Network	4
Phoenix Union High School District	5
Texas High School Project	5
YouthTruth schools without networks <sup>7</sup>	8
TOTAL	86

\* Note: Networks were only a part of the YouthTruth program model in 2009-2010.

and representatives to the YouthTruth schools have assisted school leaders in interpreting the results of the YouthTruth surveys. However, when asked about their interest in playing a larger role in YouthTruth, most network leaders that we spoke with did not express a high level of interest in doing so.

At the same time, it is clear that networks can play a larger role. Our interviews and telephone conversations with school leaders suggest that at least one network has been, and continues to be, more involved in the YouthTruth process. For example, several principals told us that this network has played a more active role in follow-up to YouthTruth results. YouthTruth results have been discussed in a number of network meetings beyond the YouthTruth convening and are sometimes addressed in peer-to-peer site visits.

*Best practice: “Coaches” from networks sometimes helped school leaders to interpret and determine the implications of YouthTruth results.*

**2.11 Summary of Major Findings**

Our surveys, site visits, and follow-up telephone calls document the wide variety of ways that schools have chosen to introduce YouthTruth to students and administer the surveys. The approaches that were adopted tended to be responsive to unique characteristics of the schools. This fact plus the finding that there were no indications that any one approach worked any better than any others lead us to think that YouthTruth should continue to allow schools to select the approaches that they take, ideally after they receive information regarding the advantages and disadvantage of the alternatives.

On the other hand, the shortfalls in providing feedback to students and teachers suggest that further action should be taken. Our recommendations for such actions can be found in Chapter Five.

<sup>7</sup> College Success Foundation (2), Denver Public Schools (1), Maya Angelou Public Charter Schools (1), Miami Public Schools (1), Seattle Public Schools (1), and Washington, D.C. Public Schools (1). Note also that YouthTruth served a Leona Group school in Detroit.

## Chapter Three

### PERCEIVED UTILITY OF YOUTHTRUTH IN PLANNING FOR SCHOOL CHANGE

*YouthTruth is something that schools need to do. Some principals think it is a disruption, but it gives us good information about what is good about our school and what is missing. It helps to validate the decisions we make.*

*--Principal of a YouthTruth high school (2010)*

*Everyone in our school, leaders and teachers, thinks the YouthTruth survey is much better than anything the district sends out. We would definitely do it again.*

*--Principal of a YouthTruth high school (2010)*

*The CEP responsiveness to our questions and needs was great.*

*--Principal of a YouthTruth high school (2010)*

#### 3.1 Introduction and Overview

There is a powerful consensus among the YouthTruth principals and coordinators that going through YouthTruth has been helpful to them. Strikingly, *all* of the sixty-nine principals in the Brandeis survey would recommend that *other* schools participate in YouthTruth, and *all* but one would like their *own* schools to participate again.

Similarly, the school leaders we spoke with in our site visits and focus groups, and those who participated in our surveys, told us that the YouthTruth reports that they received from the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) were easy to understand; that the support from CEP was helpful in answering questions; and that the results were useful in planning school change efforts. Ninety-five percent or more of the principals found the qualitative feedback and quotations from students in the report to be helpful, believed the report highlighted clear themes and areas for potential improvement in their schools, and found the executive summary and areas for discussion in the report to be useful.

Virtually all of the school leaders we surveyed and/or spoke with were able to provide a list of the changes to their school that YouthTruth has already promoted or would promote in the future. Almost without exception, the school principals we visited and who participated in the Brandeis survey were pleased with YouthTruth and said that they would like to administer the survey again in the future in order to track the impact of changes in the schools over time.

### **3.2 Quality of the YouthTruth Survey and Reports**

There is widespread consensus among school leaders that the YouthTruth survey was put together professionally, and that their interactions with CEP always resulted in prompt responses that addressed the questions or needs of the schools.

Students generally said that the language of the YouthTruth survey was understandable and they liked having the opportunity to explain their answers in a comments section. However, in a few cases, students thought the survey was too long and repetitive and/or students and school leaders told us that a few terms in the surveys and reports were not clear, such as “rigor”.

Our site visits have made it clear that principals and other school leaders greatly valued the opportunity to compare the results in their school with other schools (and among the schools that participated in YouthTruth twice, to assess trends in the results over time). For the most part, they favored having results for similar kinds of schools, e.g., early college schools and/or their networks rather than all other school participating in YouthTruth. However there was no consensus about the most useful groups to compare themselves with.

As YouthTruth continues to expand, there should be additional opportunities to allow schools to define meaningful comparison groups. We therefore believe that the trade-offs of offering schools more choice in defining the groups that they are compared with and the additional administrative burden on CEP should be carefully considered. Ideally, the participating school districts and networks would play a role in determining which comparison groups would be best for their member schools.

### **3.3 Support from CEP**

The YouthTruth school leaders that we visited and who completed the Brandeis survey are almost unanimous in their belief that CEP staff communicated well with them and were responsive to requests for information throughout the entire YouthTruth process. As noted in Exhibit 3-1 below, 94% or more of the principals who completed the survey reported that communications from CEP were clear, that they received clear communications about their roles and responsibilities under YouthTruth, that CEP staff were responsive to questions that they raised, and that CEP planning materials were useful in planning the survey and interpreting the results. Ninety percent found the website to be a useful resource.

School leaders were uniformly pleased with the opportunity to have a one-hour conversation with CEP staff to discuss their results and told us that this was an important element of YouthTruth. The support for the convenings of all schools in the network at the end of the process was even stronger. As one of the principals put it:

### Exhibit 3-1

#### ASSESSMENTS OF SUPPORT FROM CEP\* (n=76)

EFFORTS	FINDINGS ACROSS SCHOOLS
	Pct
We received clear communications from CEP about our roles and responsibilities for participating in YouthTruth	100.0%
The YouthTruth materials were useful in terms of our planning to conduct the survey	98.7%
We received clear communications from CEP concerning the purpose of YouthTruth	97.3%
The CEP staff were very responsive to any questions we raised throughout the YouthTruth process	97.3%
The YouthTruth materials were useful in terms of our planning to utilize the results of the survey	94.7%
The CEP staff have been very helpful in our efforts to use data to improve our school	91.8%
The YouthTruth website is a helpful resource	89.7%

\* Source: Brandeis survey of YouthTruth principals and coordinators (2010).

[The convening] was the most powerful part of the YouthTruth process for me. There was a bunch of educators who were grappling with information and how to use it. It didn't matter what the size or location of the school was. What mattered was the commonality of the issues.

I liked the uncensored piece of the convening especially to be able to come up with ideas that were common across the schools.

Those leaders who had had the opportunity to attend the Seattle convening during the YouthTruth pilot year were vociferous in their praise of the opportunity to do so, but there were similar positive statements about the 2009-2010 regional convenings that were sponsored by the YouthTruth networks.

### **3.4 Utility of YouthTruth in Planning for and Implementing School Change**

The principals and coordinators of the twelve YouthTruth high schools that we visited, and the vast majority of principals and coordinators who participated in our survey, believe that the data provided by YouthTruth has been helpful in planning for a wide range of school improvements and in winning support for these plans in order to put them in place.

Exhibit 3-2 on the following page shows that virtually every school leader who participated in our study (98.6%) reported that their school had either already done something, or planned to do something, to change an aspect of their school operations based upon the data from YouthTruth. Roughly a third (31.0%) said that they were already addressing one or more issues due, at least in part, to YouthTruth data; another third (35.2%) said that they were developing plans to do so, and almost all of the others (32.4%) said that they will develop a plan to do so.

**Exhibit 3-2**

**STATUS OF EFFORTS TO UTILIZE YOUTHTRUTH DATA\***  
(n=70)

STATUS OF PLANNING EFFORTS	PERCENT OF SCHOOLS
Are developing a plan to address an issue	31.0%
Will develop a plan to address an issue	35.2%
Already addressing an issue	32.4%
Other	1.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*Source: Brandeis survey of YouthTruth principals and coordinators (2010).

The school leaders at all types of schools consistently indicate that the YouthTruth data have been useful to them in a wide variety of ways. As noted in Exhibit 3-3, more than nine of every ten school leaders report that YouthTruth data have been useful in broad efforts like developing a school improvement plan as well as planning for specific changes in the schools and recognizing staff for good work at the school.

**Exhibit 3-3**

**AREAS OF PLANNED USE FOR YOUTHTRUTH DATA\***  
(n=76)

USE/PLANNED USE	ALREADY BEING DONE	PLANS TO USE IN FUTURE	TOTAL
Planning specific changes to school	73.7%	25.0%	98.7%
Developing school improvement plan	60.5%	35.5%	96.1%
Developing marketing materials	23.0%	55.4%	78.4%
Developing mechanisms for student feedback	35.1%	59.5%	94.6%
Recognizing faculty and staff work	58.7%	36.0%	94.7%
Promoting discussion for school improvement with faculty and staff	76.3%	22.4%	98.7%
Promoting discussion for school improvement with students	52.6%	43.4%	96.1%

\*Source: Brandeis survey of YouthTruth principals and coordinators (2010).

As is shown by the data in Appendix E, there do not appear to be any systematic variations in these results when broken out by type of school.

**3.5 Overall Assessments of YouthTruth**

Almost invariably, when asked for an overall assessment of YouthTruth, the school leaders that we visited and who participated in the Brandeis survey provided powerful positive responses. Almost without exception, the school principals said that they were pleased with YouthTruth and said that they would like to administer the YouthTruth survey again in the future to track the impact of changes in the schools over time. Most strikingly, 100% of the principals in our survey

said that they would recommend that other schools participate in YouthTruth in the future. Similarly, as was noted in the Exhibit 3-3 and the exhibits in the appendices:

- 98.7% of the principals said that they had already used YouthTruth data to plan specific changes in their schools, or planned to do so;
- Almost nine of every ten principals said that the YouthTruth report provided them with at least some new perspectives on their school, and an even higher proportion of them believed that the YouthTruth reports helped to validate their own beliefs about things that were (or were not) going well at the school;
- More than nine-tenths of principals told us that that YouthTruth was more useful than most other surveys that are administered at their schools; and
- Almost 95% said that YouthTruth had been “good for their schools.”

It is noteworthy that all principals who had participated in YouthTruth twice believed that doing so enabled them to clarify trends in their schools and yielded information on the impact of changes made in response to the first YouthTruth survey.

However, school leaders uniformly described an increasingly difficult outlook in terms of availability of discretionary funds in their budgets to pay for efforts like YouthTruth. None of the four principals visited in the fall said that they would be able to do so if there were a cost of roughly \$2500 or \$5000 attached to the process. They simply do not have the funds to do so— unless their school or network had a grant that would support the effort.

### **3.6 Summary of Major Findings**

The leaders of the twelve schools that we visited and the sixty-nine schools who provided data on this topic in the Brandeis survey provide a strong vote of confidence in YouthTruth. All or virtually all of them express satisfaction with the YouthTruth survey and the support that they received from CEP. Almost without exception, they say they now have, or will soon have plans to use the results in planning school improvement efforts. All would recommend it to their peers in other schools.

This kind of support from principals is helpful for those who promote YouthTruth, but it is not sufficient to insure that the results of the YouthTruth survey will actually be used in bringing about changes in the schools that result in better outcomes. The evidence that we have accumulated thus far to address these issues is presented in Chapter Four below.



## Chapter Four

### IMPACT OF YOUTHTRUTH ON PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

*YouthTruth was the catalyst for change.  
--High school principal (2010)*

*The results [of YouthTruth] generally validated what we were thinking about the status of our school. But there were also some surprises, for example, around goals and aspirations, where many of our students apparently did not have any.  
--YouthTruth high school leader (2010)*

*The biggest issue with YouthTruth was figuring out what to do with the results.  
--YouthTruth principal (2010)*

#### **4.1 Introduction and Overview**

High school principals and YouthTruth coordinators tell us that receipt of the YouthTruth reports is leading to a wide range of changes in their schools. In many cases, school change is already underway and in even more, planning had begun, or was expected to begin soon, at the time of our end-of-the-school-year survey and last site visits and follow-up telephone calls.

Frequently, the YouthTruth data have reinforced existing beliefs and perceptions of school leadership. Thus, in many instances, it is more precise to say that YouthTruth has promoted change rather than caused it since school leaders said that they had already been aware of the problems and thinking about doing things to respond. But even in these cases, it would be accurate to say that YouthTruth provided additional impetus to the change efforts.

#### **4.2 Changes at YouthTruth High Schools**

The YouthTruth process has already led to some changes in participating high schools and school leaders expect many more. The Brandeis survey of 100 principals and YouthTruth coordinators from the 86 high schools that participated in YouthTruth provide some quantitative estimates of a wide range of these kinds of changes. Our site visits to twelve YouthTruth high schools add further context that is somewhat less optimistic.

As is shown in Exhibit 4-1 below, the changes that YouthTruth is said to be producing cover a number of different aspects of the high school experience. Close to nine out of every ten schools that participated in the Brandeis survey reported that they had already made, or were planning to make, changes in several key aspects of the ways that their schools were operating. At the high end, these changes addressed discipline and rules (89.5%), relationships in the school (88.0%), and curriculum and instruction (87.6%). At the other extreme, just over half (57.1%) said that

there had already implemented or were planning to implement changes in assessment, and more than a third (33.9%) said that they had implemented or were planning to implement changes in the physical infrastructure of their schools.<sup>8</sup>

**Exhibit 4-1**

**TYPES OF CHANGES THAT YOUTHTRUTH RESULTS ARE EXPECTED TO PRODUCE\***  
(n=76)

<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>PERCENT OF SCHOOLS WHERE CHANGE HAS ALREADY OCCURRED</b>	<b>PERCENT OF SCHOOL PLANNING CHANGE IN THIS AREA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Physical infrastructure	10.7%	23.2%	33.9%
Organizational and structural changes	25.0%	36.1%	61.1%
Curriculum and instruction	30.1%	57.5%	87.6%
Assessment and standards-based testing	15.7%	41.4%	57.1%
Professional development	28.8%	47.9%	76.7%
Health and safety issues	15.6%	48.4%	64.0%
Relationships in school	34.7%	53.3%	88.0%
Discipline and rules	38.8%	50.7%	89.5%

\*Source: Brandeis survey of YouthTruth principals and coordinators.

The exhibit also shows that the proportion of schools where specific changes are already under way is uniformly much lower than the proportion that are still planning to make the given changes. For example, more than half of the schools reported that they planned to make changes in curriculum and instruction (57.5%) and discipline and rules (50.7%) which were not yet under way at the time of the Brandeis survey.

These findings are understandable since our survey took place within a month or two after many of the schools had received their YouthTruth reports and attended their respective convenings. There was little time to complete planning and get change efforts under way. It would therefore be instructive to follow-up with schools at a later date to check their progress here.

As we discuss later in this report, one cannot simply assume that all plans for specific school changes will in fact lead to changes, and one cannot assume that the changes will be well-implemented. Therefore, we believe that it is too soon to develop more precise estimates of the impact of YouthTruth on the participating high schools. Further follow-up research is needed in this area.

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<sup>8</sup> As is noted in Exhibit F-4-1 in the Appendix, there are no obvious patterns in how the types of changes vary by type of high school.

Exhibit 4-2 on the following page provides a few illustrative examples of the kinds of changes that were specifically attributed to the YouthTruth report by principals in the twelve high schools that we visited. The findings in this exhibit indicate that many of the changes fit into the categories of enhancing relationships of adults and youth in schools, professional development, restructuring of curriculum, and adding extracurricular activities.

### **4.3 Barriers to Full Utilization of YouthTruth**

#### Lack of Time and Resources

When asked about the greatest challenges to conducting YouthTruth or acting on the data in the YouthTruth reports that they had received from CEP, principals and coordinators responded “not having enough time to plan” more frequently than any other answer. Close to a third of the principals gave that answer (32.9%) (see Exhibit E-4-2 in Appendix). As one principal at a school we visited in the spring told us:

We don't have an action plan [to follow-up on the YouthTruth report] yet, but I plan to create one. The areas for change will be targeted this summer over a one week period.

A coordinator expanded upon this point:

I went over the results of the YouthTruth survey with the principal, the parent association head and the head of the minority parent association. But I didn't have any more time to do anything more. I had to build a new schedule for the whole school. I fault myself that we didn't go back later and incorporate YouthTruth results into our school, but we had other data [on student performance] that was more immediate and was gathered from more focused lenses.

Another principal explained that it would have been ideal to involve teachers more in the YouthTruth planning and interpretation activities, but this, too, would have required more time:

I didn't consider YouthTruth an integral part of my planning process because I was the only one in the school who “owned it”. If I had structured it in a way to have teachers get something out of it, this would have helped.

A number of principals suggested that it would take time to fully integrate the YouthTruth results into their school operations. For example, one principal told us that she had honed in on the findings about discipline, but in general no change had yet taken place in her school.

**Exhibit 4-2**

**EXAMPLES OF CHANGES ATTRIBUTED TO YOUTHTRUTH BY SCHOOL LEADERS\***

<b>EXAMPLES</b>	<b>TYPE OF SCHOOL</b>
<b>Enhancing Counseling and Other Links between Students and Teachers</b>	
Institution of eight “advisory periods” per year called “home rooms” in which teachers can work with small groups of students on the issues of greatest importance to them.	Large urban high school <sup>9</sup>
Individual meetings with principal, counselor, student and parent for all ninth graders to discuss post-secondary options	Small charter school
Hiring guidance counselor to address graduation and postsecondary needs of students	Small charter school
Hiring additional counselor who also helps with student groups, support groups, and student active involvement in school to build self-capacity	Small school
Increasing one on one time and small groups sessions between teachers and students	Large urban high school
<b>Restructuring Teacher Professional Development and Support</b>	
Professional development for teachers with an emphasis on inclusion of 9 <sup>th</sup> graders so that they feel positive about the school as a welcoming and supportive environment	Small school
Restructuring teacher support and training based on teacher experience and time	STEM academy
Focusing more intently on professional development opportunities centered on understanding and developing rigor and revamping skills in technology and assessment	Small charter school
Holding summer curriculum planning institutes focusing on curriculum	Large urban high school
<b>Restructuring Curriculum/Extracurricular Activities to meet Students Needs</b>	
Modifying block scheduling and study hall period to provide increased opportunities for students to get help and complete homework	Large urban high school
Restructuring student grading system to include 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills such as context, cooperation, and teamwork to focus on a range of student outcomes and abilities, not just content	STEM academy
Implementation of a SUCCESS Seminar program to address issues of anger management, coping, and stress management	Small school
Implementation of a college advising course for juniors and seniors to prepare students for college.	Small school
Inclusion of 9 <sup>th</sup> grade college preparation segment as part of orientation	Early college
Inclusion of college success program to enhance students’ knowledge, skills, and abilities for college access	Early college
Development of student leadership capacity through Summer Outward Bound program so that students become advocates for school change	Small school
Implementation of several programs and classes to address students’ concerns about credits, transcripts, resources for postsecondary education	Other
Planning additional extracurricular activities, such as sports teams, to address students’ desire for expanded opportunities	Other
Planning culinary training for spring 2011 to meet students request for expanded curricular opportunities	Small school
Focusing more on safety by creating two lunch periods so that there is more “space” for students and less opportunity for disruption	Small school
Restructured ninth grade orientation curriculum or provided additional curricular activities such culinary training or sports teams	Small schools

\*Source: Brandeis site visits to twelve YouthTruth high schools. These results are merely illustrative and cannot be assumed to be typical of all YouthTruth high schools.

<sup>9</sup> A similar approach was adopted in several other schools that we visited.  
*Formative Evaluation of YouthTruth*  
*Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University*

In some ways, the lack of time to plan and implement change based on YouthTruth is related to the lack of resources. Principals often told us that they lacked sufficient staff to take the lead in systematic review of YouthTruth data since everyone was so busy with other things. As one principal put it:

I'd love to have someone come into our school [as a consultant] to help get this work done. It would be wonderful to be able to dedicate a person to do it. I'm spinning all the time. We could use the YouthTruth data at professional development sessions. It would be good to have someone review the data and put together professional development presentations, but we are just too busy.

***Best Practice:***

***A principal was able to obtain a grant to bring in an outside experienced consultant who knew the district to lead the YouthTruth planning process, and work with teachers to integrate the YouthTruth results into efforts to change the school culture. Together, they developed a "gap analysis" and then an "action plan."***

This principal told us that it would be useful to have a grant from the BMGF to take the information and work with people in the school to put it together into a workshop where they could develop tools for plan and carry out change. Another principal was actually able to use a grant for this precise purpose:

If we didn't have a grant to pay for a consultant to help with planning and stipends for teachers to participate, the planning process for using YouthTruth data would have floundered. The support piece is critical to developing an effective action plan.

Other Factors

More than a fifth of the principals (22.4%) said that the changes that were supported by YouthTruth were lower in priority for them because other school change or improvement priorities had to come first. One in seven (14.5%) reported that a lack of resources to implement intended changes was a major barrier. It is noteworthy that, as is shown in Exhibit F-4-2 in the Appendix, only one principal said that he felt that not having enough expertise to use the data to plan was a major challenge for him.

School leaders differed greatly in their opinions about the optimum timing to conduct YouthTruth surveys and get feedback. Some said that getting results at the end of the year left them in a good position to plan efforts to share them with teachers over the summer or at the beginning of the following school year. But in a number of schools, we were told that it was hard to create an organized effort to review the YouthTruth reports because they came back to late in the school year. As two of principals put it:

When results [of things like YouthTruth] are provided in May, people are fried, and unless a system is in place to have a conversation on how to share the results and incorporate the results in our planning, things just get lost. Without a plan in place, results coming in May will get lost.

Because we got the results at the time of testing [in the late spring] nothing could be done until the summer.

Several school leaders described resistance to hearing bad news on the part of some of their teachers and the need to carefully plan meetings to deal with this challenge. As one of them put it:

When we presented the [YouthTruth] results, the teachers had difficulty with them. It was like “a death in the room”. The teachers had to go through the Kubler-Ross stages of denial, anger, and then acceptance and thinking about ways to make progress.”

This same assessment was shared by a teacher from another high school who recalled the weekly faculty meeting in which the principal shared the YouthTruth results:

It did stir up feelings among the teachers. There was some bashing of the results.

#### **4.4 Emerging Lessons about the Process of Promoting School Change**

The education reform literature is replete with books and articles that document the barriers to planning and implementing change in contemporary American high schools.<sup>10</sup> Our site visits confirmed these patterns and provided many examples of the nuances of the process of using YouthTruth to promote school change. Perhaps the most obvious of these patterns is that it is far easier to plan and implement changes in relatively small schools when school leadership is committed to doing so. For example, the principal of a small school told us that YouthTruth demonstrated that there had been relatively little attention to post-high school planning among his ninth and tenth graders, while guidance staff focused on the eleventh and twelfth graders. In response, he set up a series of one-on-one meetings with *each* ninth grader and their families to discuss these issues.

On the other hand, the leadership of the three largest urban high schools that we visited all stressed the wide range of planning and school change efforts that were *already* under way at their schools when YouthTruth arrived, and the challenges of finding sufficient time for senior administrators to devote to YouthTruth planning. In one of the schools, a grant had made it possible for the principal to hire a senior retired principal and district administrator to plan and lead the many sessions necessary to digest YouthTruth results and determine appropriate changes for the school. The grant also provided stipends for teachers to take part in the process. Simply put, the principal does not believe that sophisticated YouthTruth planning could have taken place without this kind of financial support.

As is illustrated in the data in the appendix to this report, the leaders in charter schools were more likely than their counterparts in other types of schools to actually begin implementing changes by the time of our survey for many, but not all, types of changes. We did not visit enough charter schools to fully explore this phenomenon, but it may reflect the fact that principals of charter schools often have more ability to decide upon and implement changes than principals in even relatively small public high schools.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, Reitzug and O’Hair (2002) argue that several conditions, practices, and processes including little time for collaboration and the lack of inquiry processes such as whole school rubrics influence opportunities for school change. Other researchers, such as Malen and Knapp (1997) and Tyack and Cuban (1995) suggest that schools’ emphasis on conformity and maintaining the necessary structures and processes to ensure adherence to school and district policies results in entrenched teaching practices that are difficult to change. And, educators such as Darling-Hamond (1997) and Oakes, Quartz, Ryan and Lipton (2000) believe that schools need to become more democratic places of learning that embrace transparent and inclusive decision-making to support the development of educative, caring and participatory school communities.

#### **4.4 Assessing Causality**

The principals, coordinators, and teachers that we interviewed told us that many—but not all—of the YouthTruth results tended to reflect beliefs that they already had about student perceptions. Thus we conclude that the observed results in terms of school change (and plans for school change) can not be attributed solely to Youth Truth. Instead it is more appropriate to say that YouthTruth has contributed to the efforts to put changes into place.

Our site visits have also shown that availability of YouthTruth data has promoted school change in more ways than one. Not only has it provided insights to school leadership, but we were often told that having statistics to back up pre-existing perceptions was seen as helping in promoting the changes in school operations, internally with teachers and externally with school district/network personnel.

#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter documents the evidence that many types of changes that are already in place, or are being planned, for in the 86 schools that have implemented YouthTruth in the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years, and the testimony that YouthTruth has been a major contributing factor. It is clearly a good start, but given the fact that so many of the changes were said to still be in the planning stages, it will not be possible to develop more definite statements about the extent to which changes have occurred until more time has passed, and it will be even longer before one can begin to develop estimates of the impact of these changes on school functioning and student outcomes. As noted in Chapter Five below, we believe that further research could yield considerable benefits in understanding the processes whereby YouthTruth results are translated into school change and the kinds of steps that could be taken to increase their effectiveness.

## Chapter Five

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*I'd do it again if provided the opportunity. If for nothing else, it would provide an opportunity to see what the data look like after time has passed*

*--Principal at a YouthTruth high school (2010).*

*I think any school could benefit from YouthTruth, but in order for this to work, you would need to keep kids focused and on topic."*

*--Principal of a YouthTruth high school (2010)*

#### **5.1 Introduction and Overview**

Our study has shown that the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) has developed a solid YouthTruth survey instrument and set of procedures to implement it in high schools, that most school leaders feel that it has been very well-implemented, and that it is beginning to achieve its intended outcome of using student voice to promote school improvement.

We believe that this track record supports further efforts to extend and expand YouthTruth and given the formative focus of this report, we have provided an extended series of recommendations for program enhancement and other steps to strengthen the program as this happens.

#### **5.2 Highlights of Research Findings and Conclusions**

As has been discussed throughout this report, it is clear that YouthTruth has been designed and implemented in a high quality fashion, has already contributed to some changes in school activities, and is highly likely to result in more in the future. Participating high school leaders overwhelmingly believe that YouthTruth has been valuable for their schools. As is illustrated in Exhibit 5-1 on the following page, the highlights of our findings include the following:

- YouthTruth has developed a high quality instrument that assesses student perceptions of their high schools using language that most students understand in sufficient depth to cover many key elements of high school education;
- The school leaders believe that the methods that have been used to introduce YouthTruth to students have been effective in eliciting honest responses;



**Exhibit 5-1**

**OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL**

STEP	FINDING	RECOMMENDATION
CEP develops a high quality survey and approaches to implement it and then provides feedback to school leaders	<p>The YouthTruth survey was well-designed and CEP provided effective support to schools in implementing the survey and interpreting the results</p> <p>School leaders highly value the YouthTruth experience and recommend it to their peers.</p>	The basic YouthTruth approach is worthy of further support, if it can meet the challenges spelled out in our report.
Schools introduce YouthTruth properly	<p>Schools have implemented YouthTruth in a variety of ways.</p> <p>Many seem exemplary and all appear to be effective.</p>	Schools should be given information on the strengths and weaknesses of different options to implementing YouthTruth and flexibility in selecting which ones are most appropriate for them.
Schools get understandable feedback on results	School leaders overwhelmingly believe the feedback on student perceptions of their schools is understandable and useful to them.	CEP should explore the most useful “comparison schools” to benchmark individual school results.
Schools share results with teachers and students	The process of providing feedback has been uneven, with limited feedback to students and teachers in many cases.	CEP should take steps to insure adherence to this objective, such as requiring schools to provide a “feedback and analysis plan” before they participate in YouthTruth
Schools develop plans for changes based on YouthTruth results	<p>School leaders have used YouthTruth results to drive the change process in all schools, either promoting pre-existing ideas or developing new ideas and priorities.</p> <p>All schools say that they are developing plans for school change based on YouthTruth results.</p>	Steps should be taken to better understand and document “best practices” in the process of translating YouthTruth results into actionable plans for school improvement.
Schools implement plans	Many planned changes had not yet been implemented at the time of our survey and field visits.	Steps should be taken to document the extent to which plans are implemented and whether schools can benefit from further support in the process of implementing plans.
Schools show measurably better performance and outcomes	It is too soon to know whether YouthTruth is leading to demonstrably improved outcomes in schools.	Steps should be taken to document the extent to which YouthTruth is indeed leading to demonstrable improvements in school outcomes and how the process can be strengthened

- School leaders report that they understand the contents of the YouthTruth reports and have already begun using them to plan school change;
- Feedback to teachers and students has been uneven; and
- It is too soon to tell whether many of the planned changes will be implemented and whether the implemented changes will bring about demonstrable improvements in school outcomes.

The commitment of the school leaders in the schools that we visited to ongoing reflection and school improvement based on YouthTruth student perceptual data shows that there is a market for this kind of enterprise, especially among the relatively small charter and theme schools that have been the predominant venues for YouthTruth to this point.<sup>11</sup> Thus, efforts to collect, analyze, and provide feedback on student perceptions of their high schools can indeed become an important element of broader efforts to reform America's high schools.

Our study has identified several areas where we believe implementation of YouthTruth can be strengthened. As noted in Chapter Two, there is a need to do more to insure that the goals of providing feedback to students and teachers are met. We have already noted the unevenness of school efforts to share results with teachers and staff. In many of those instances, personal/emotional issues related to defensiveness on the part of teachers have cropped up, further complicating efforts to use the YouthTruth data to promote school change.

Sharing results in meaningful and non-threatening ways with faculty requires open and ongoing discussions about both the positive and negative findings. But if done well, it can be the first step in securing buy-in so that school leaders and instructional staff can move on to the difficult work of change for effective teaching and positive student outcomes. Schools may benefit from help and guidance in planning this process of providing feedback to their teachers.

The students we spoke with at the YouthTruth high schools were excited about the idea of helping school leaders hear their voice but the vast majority had not heard anything back about the results of the YouthTruth survey process. At minimum, this does not reinforce the idea of school commitment to listening to students. Timing issues may have contributed to lack of feedback in some instances, and lack of knowledge/time on how to best prepare this kind of feedback played an important role in explaining what this has happened. Thus we believe that schools may benefit from help in planning feedback to students.

In addition, our study suggests that there may be opportunities to strengthen YouthTruth through enhanced partnerships with school districts and networks. Network leaders have been influential in obtaining agreement of many schools to participate in YouthTruth and have been helpful in planning the end-of-project convenings of high schools that have participated in YouthTruth. Most of the network and district leaders that we spoke with during our participation in

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<sup>11</sup> As is discussed in our recommendations section, we believe that efforts to assess the size of the market beyond these smaller schools and schools within networks that are linked to the BMGF should be explored.

convenings and follow-up phone calls appear highly supportive of YouthTruth and involvement in the work.

The chances of promoting lasting change in schools are greater when there is active support for these efforts at the district/network levels. Without this kind of support, the benefits of YouthTruth may disappear when principals and/or other top leaders leave their schools. As noted in our section on recommendations, we therefore believe that efforts should be made to explore the feasibility of networks playing a larger role than they did in the 2009-2010 school year.

### **5.3 Conclusions Relative to the Four BMGF Study Questions**

At the outset of our study, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation staff posed four key questions for our study to address. This section of the report summarizes our study findings and conclusions relative to each of them.

*Research Question 1: How and to what extent can student perceptual data be useful?*

Our study provides clear evidence that well-designed and well-implemented efforts to provide school leadership with student perception data can be useful in planning for and implementation of a wide range of school change/school improvement efforts. Our surveys and site visits document the many changes have already been put in place due, at least in part, to the YouthTruth survey results. Planning for more changes is underway in all but one of the schools that provided survey data on this topic.

*Research Question 2: How, to what extent, and in what ways do different actors use YouthTruth data to drive action?*

According to network leaders, school principals and YouthTruth coordinators we spoke with or participated in our survey, there is no doubt that YouthTruth is leading to changes in their schools.<sup>12</sup> But the processes that were used to review the YouthTruth survey results and plan changes have differed greatly in formality and structure. A few examples illustrate this point:

- In one small school, the YouthTruth data was organized and presented to the entire faculty which reviewed the report in preparation of their school plan. In this school, YouthTruth was used as part of a broader review of the teaching and learning process where students provided ideas for change.
- An early college high school used the YouthTruth data as part of its strategy session with its faculty. This school incorporated the report into a half workday session where faculty examined the results of the YouthTruth survey, identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and how they may be used to leverage change.

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<sup>12</sup> The closest we come to an exception to this rule is a principal who said that the results of the YouthTruth surveys had not been used at of the time of the survey, but "there is hope that some of the resulting info from the YouthTruth surveys will be reviewed and utilized in the next school year."

- Another school is using YouthTruth in discussions with the school PTSA, local school council, and other leadership teams, and, one district has used YouthTruth both during principals' meetings where it was examined for marketing purposes, and as part of principal visits to peer schools learning about its effectiveness in teaching and learning.
- In a large urban high school, the principal used money from a grant to hire a retired principal and pay stipends to teachers who put extra time in to work together to conduct a systematic analysis of the YouthTruth data and its implications for school improvement.

At the same time, it is important to note that since many of these YouthTruth schools are either currently in the planning stage, or have only recently implemented plans for change, it is still too early to determine whether these actions will bear fruit in terms of changes that are fully implemented, or that, even if they are fully (and well-) implemented, whether they will have the intended effects on student outcomes.

With this proviso in mind, we can report school leaders (say that they) are using or plan to use YouthTruth to drive change in areas ranging from organizational and structural changes to curriculum and instruction to professional development and performance assessment for faculty and staff.

For example, we learned from our survey and site visits that schools have added, revised, or plan to include classes and programs that provide increased opportunities for college access and transitions to other postsecondary attainment. Several YouthTruth schools have added advisory programs that serve multiple purposes such as enabling students to discuss issues that are important to them with teachers and other students, learning more about possible careers and college and other postsecondary opportunities, and creating positive relationships between students and teachers for a more supportive and welcoming school environment. Other examples of specific changes include the following:

- One urban high school has restructured its grading system—adding 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills so that students are graded not only on content knowledge, but on a range of other skills and abilities such as contextual learning, cooperation, and teamwork.
- A small school has implemented a SUCCESS Seminar program. The program is offered to freshman and new students addressing issues such as anger management, coping skills stress management, goal setting, and communication skills.
- Several early colleges have included 9<sup>th</sup> grade college preparation and college success programs
- Other small YouthTruth schools have revamped their ninth grade orientation curriculum or provided additional curricular activities such culinary training or sports teams while another has implemented a college advising course for junior and seniors
- A STEM academy has restructured teacher support and training based on teacher experience

*Research Question 3: Do key actors perceive that actions taken in response to the YouthTruth process and data result in improvements at participating schools?*

The school leaders and network staff that we have interviewed in site visits and telephone calls and the school leaders that participated in our survey are all in agreement that YouthTruth has promoted a wide range of school change planning efforts and that some changes are already being put into place. They *believe* that these changes will improve the functioning and outcomes associated with their schools, and the kinds of changes being put in place are in line with the current best thinking about desirable changes in America's high schools.

But, as noted earlier in this chapter, it is still too soon to say whether these changes will be put into place and, even if they are, that they can be seen as directly promoting to measurable changes in school functioning and student outcomes. It would, for example, be difficult to *prove* that changes in school discipline policy are resulting in an observed decline in student suspensions after only a year or two. Thus, only time (and solid research) can tell whether the beliefs and expectations are translated in documentable improved outcomes.

*Research Question 4: What clues does the 2009-2010 school year experience offer us in terms of the potential for scaling this model?*

YouthTruth has been well implemented and is or is expected to be leading to changes in a wide variety of types of high schools including charter schools, early college schools, STEM schools, and other small themed schools in many different parts of the country. This implies that further efforts to move to scale in these kinds of schools would be feasible (if funding and administrative logistical issues can be resolved).

However, since only three large urban schools have been the setting for YouthTruth and since the record of achievements in some of them is modest, many questions pertaining to scaling up in these kinds of schools remain to be answered. These issues include the best ways to implement YouthTruth in such schools, the best ways to use YouthTruth to promote school change, and the appropriate level of expectations for change in school operations and outcomes in these settings.

As noted in Chapter Two, many of the schools that have participated in YouthTruth during the first two years have either had ties to the BMGF or belong to networks with such ties. But not all of them fit into this category. Thus, questions about the attractiveness of YouthTruth to a wider group of schools still remain to be answered—and should be explored. But there is no reason to believe that schools without strong BMGF connections will not find it equally attractive as long as there are no costs to the participating schools and districts.

## **5.4 Recommendations for the Future Implementation of YouthTruth**

### Continued Support for YouthTruth

Our study did not address the costs of administering YouthTruth. But it has documented a wide range of benefits that have already occurred in the participating schools and additional ones that are expected. Thus, if funds are available, we have no hesitation recommending continued support for YouthTruth and continued planned expansion.<sup>13</sup>

### Development of a Written Agreement with Participating Schools

Providing feedback to participating students lies at the heart of the YouthTruth approach. Systematic sharing of results with teachers and other school staff is an important element of the process of using the YouthTruth results to plan school changes. We therefore believe that the uneven record of schools in carrying out both of these tasks is an important area to focus upon in efforts to refine the model and approach. One idea that is worthy of consideration in this regard would be requiring schools who wish to participate in YouthTruth to produce a plan, in advance, of how they will share the results with students, teachers, and other school staff and incorporate this plan into written agreements between CEP and the schools.<sup>14</sup> This could possibly be accompanied by an expanded role for school districts and networks in working with school leaders to develop and implement the most appropriate ways to share YouthTruth results with teachers and students at each of their schools.

### Priority for Learning from the Experiences of Large Urban High Schools and Others without Links to the BMGF

The challenges that are faced in trying to introduce and administer the YouthTruth surveys and then to integrate results into ongoing school change efforts were clear in all three large urban high schools that we visited. Given the ambitions of YouthTruth to serve in all high school settings and the limited number of large urban schools where YouthTruth has been implemented to date, we believe that CEP and the BMGF staff should make it a high priority to engage a substantial number of larger high schools in the effort for 2010-2011 and make special efforts to carefully observe the processes and outcomes in these schools. Doing this would make it possible to develop a set of “best practices” for larger high schools.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Our fall site visits and follow-up telephone calls suggest that most schools do not have the money to pay for administration of YouthTruth under current fiscal constraints without grant money to do so. Despite their appreciation of the value of YouthTruth, only one or two said that they might be able to find discretionary funds to support such an endeavor in their existing budgets.

<sup>14</sup> This would build upon the foundation of the existing agreements between CEP and the participating high schools that spell out the obligations of the high schools and incorporate a way for the schools to certify that they have “read the full contents of the [agreement] and agree to the terms and conditions outlined by CEP.”

<sup>15</sup> Plans are already in place to accomplish this in 2010-2011.

We also believe it would be useful for those considering the replicability of the YouthTruth model to explore the attractiveness of YouthTruth in networks and schools without pre-existing links to the Foundation. In more than a few cases, we heard that the link between the Foundation and YouthTruth was a factor in the decisions of networks and schools to participate. It would therefore be useful to see *how* important this link turns out to be. This approach would entail devoting a higher priority to recruiting schools without these kinds of links and trying to learn from the experience.

### Repeated Implementation of YouthTruth in the Same Schools

The majority of principals in the schools we visited were interested in learning how effective the changes that they were planning would be in terms of improving the operations and outcomes of their schools. Some principals believed that annual administration of YouthTruth would provide a valuable set of guideposts to track the impact these kinds of changes, along with reports on trends in other kinds of school outcomes. Other principals said that a year was too short a time period for changes to be planned, implemented and have an impact on student life in the school. They favored administration of YouthTruth every second or third year for this purpose.

We believe that there are clear benefits to tracking the changes that occur in schools by administering YouthTruth at several points over time. However, without clear evidence of how long it should take to see the results of YouthTruth-promoted changes, we believe that participating schools should be encouraged to repeat YouthTruth over time, leaving the interval up to them.<sup>16</sup>

### Development of Standards and Expectations for YouthTruth Implementation and Results

The YouthTruth survey results provide quantifiable measures of school functioning. But the availability of these kinds of data raises questions about the need to establish *standards of performance* and hence to be in a position to answer the questions of “how good is good enough?” and “What levels of performance suggest that YouthTruth management should begin to consider corrective actions for the future?” For example:

- Is it enough that four in five principals personally attended the YouthTruth assemblies or other approach used to introduce Youth Truth to the students at the school?
- Is it enough that five of every six principals believed that the approach to introducing YouthTruth at their school was “effective in providing motivation for all or most of our students to take the survey seriously and answer honestly”?
- Is it a problem that only four of every five schools had begun the process of sharing YouthTruth results with teachers, students, and others at the time that the Brandeis survey was fielded at the end of the 2009-2010 school year?

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<sup>16</sup> If schools are eventually expected to pay for YouthTruth, it would be desirable to offer incentives for the second, third, and subsequent efforts to do the surveys.

If schools, districts, networks, or other groups could develop such standards, they could then draw clear conclusions of how well specific schools were measuring up to them, and thus be in a better position to decide how to prioritize their school reform efforts.

### Exploration of Other Avenues to Promote Student Voice

On numerous occasions, the students who participated in our focus groups at the school said that they valued the experience of being able to discuss their opinions in a group that did not include any of their teachers or school administrators. This finding raises the question of whether those who seek to strengthen student voice might also explore whether there are feasible approaches that go beyond surveys. One possibility would be exploring ways to use these other approaches to build upon the results of the YouthTruth surveys.

### Providing Additional Support for YouthTruth High Schools

CEP provides a broad spectrum of support for the high schools that choose to participate in YouthTruth including an “informational webinar” for schools that express interest, a mandatory “Get Started Webinar” in which CEP explains what it means to implement YouthTruth at the school, and a YouthTruth website that contains critical operational information such as response rates and access to reports.

Nevertheless, for the most part, schools that participate in YouthTruth are on their own in planning precisely how to introduce YouthTruth to their students, administer the surveys, provide feedback to students and teachers/other staff, and plan how to utilize the YouthTruth reports in planning for school improvement. We believe that the school-level planning for YouthTruth might be strengthened at relatively low costs by preparation of a YouthTruth Handbook and exploration of whether networks could play a role in this process.

The YouthTruth Handbook might contain a step-by-step review of each major step in utilizing planning, implementing, and using the results of YouthTruth, a discussion of the different approaches that schools have taken to each of them, along with assessments that schools have made about the pros and cons of the options that they have chosen. The Handbook might cover such topics as:

- Decisions about who should and should not take the YouthTruth survey
- Alternative approaches to introducing YouthTruth to students
- Alternative approaches to conducting the survey/collecting the data
- Alternative approaches to sharing the results with students, teachers, and others such as parents
- Ideas on how to prepare student-friendly summaries of the YouthTruth results and how the school is beginning to respond to them

This Handbook might in some ways be similar to (or perhaps a companion to or incorporated into) the idea of a YouthTruth in Practice (YTIP) on-line forum that is currently under consideration by CEP.



Many school leaders expressed a desire for this kind of support. For example, one principal told us that:

We would like more help on planning on the front end of implementing YouthTruth and in terms of following up on the results. Ideally, CEP could say, “Here is the survey and here is how to develop a plan for the year.”

In 2009-2010, seven networks worked with CEP in recruiting schools to participate in YouthTruth and in planning and scheduling the final regional convenings in which YouthTruth schools received additional information and had an opportunity to share their YouthTruth experiences. We believe that there might be an expanded role for networks in supporting schools that could benefit from such assistance in deciding how to best utilize YouthTruth, perhaps in conjunction with the above-described Handbook. Therefore, we would recommend that BMGF and CEP explore whether there is interest in this kind of role among any of the existing networks, and if there is, initiating one or two pilot efforts in the coming year to see how it works out.

Finally, we note that CEP has been exploring the possibility of obtaining financial support for YouthTruth by charging participating high schools a fee of a few thousand dollars. Our initial discussions of this idea with a few schools in the fall of 2010 suggest that most—if not all—high schools have extremely limited amounts of discretionary funds and it is unlikely that they would continue with YouthTruth if such costs were imposed. A more systematic exploration of this issue has been initiated by CEP, but if this pattern holds true, it will be necessary to identify other ways to support the expansion and continuation of YouthTruth, perhaps through grants to the participating networks.

## **5.5 Recommendations for Future Research**

As was discussed in Chapter Four of this report, the number of schools that have participated in YouthTruth that have already implemented (or begun to implement) change is far smaller than the numbers who say that they plan to implement any of the types of changes that we addressed in our survey. Experience teaches us that not all planned changes in high schools actually occur (and that some changes occur with relatively little planning). Therefore, we believe that it would be helpful to conduct a second round of data collection at the YouthTruth high schools, perhaps one year after they had received their reports, in order to develop more precise estimates of the degree to which YouthTruth is indeed resulting in (or promoting) specific kinds of changes in the schools and the factors that promote and hamper such utilization.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Compared to the schools that we visited in the spring, the four schools that we visited in the fall of 2010 had experienced a somewhat longer time period after the YouthTruth reports were received by the high schools. This allowed us a somewhat better opportunity to determine how YouthTruth data were integrated into planning processes. But even in these schools, planning for changes based on YouthTruth had not been completed by that time. We therefore believe that further surveys and visits to YouthTruth high schools that are carried out at least a year after the YouthTruth results have been made available would yield additional, even more useful, insights into these processes by which student perception data is, and is not, promoting specific kinds of changes.

We understand that there will be a substantial number of high schools who will participate in YouthTruth for a second (or perhaps even third) time in 2010-2011. We believe that collection and analysis of longitudinal data evaluating changes within individual schools over time can be at least as powerful as the current efforts to compare YouthTruth results with other schools in their networks. Therefore, we recommend further research to understand the benefits, associated with utilization of YouthTruth at two or more periods over time as well as the best ways to utilize these data in school improvement efforts.

Finally, we believe that additional research would provide valuable insights into the impact of YouthTruth on the “bottom lines” of high school education, i.e., whether the kinds of changes that are instituted as a result of YouthTruth contribute to improvements in the standard measured outcomes of schooling. There are numerous methodological challenges that stand in the way of finding causal links between the YouthTruth-inspired school reforms and improvements in standard measures of school effectiveness such as attendance, disciplinary actions, and heightened academic achievement, graduation rates, and engagement in post-secondary education activities. But it is critical that efforts to enhance high school education remain focused on these ultimate outcomes, and that funders, researchers, and educators work closely together to determine the extent to which our efforts are producing demonstrable progress in these areas, along with learning more about what can be done to promote this kind of progress.

## APPENDIX A

### OVERVIEW OF YOUTHTRUTH SCHOOLS (2008-2009 AND 2009-2010)

The 86 schools that have participated in YouthTruth during the first two years of its existence are from twelve geographically diverse districts and networks across the United States—Atlanta Public Schools, College Success Foundation, District of Columbia Public Schools, Denver Public Schools, The Leona Group, Maya Angelou Public Charter Schools, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, North Carolina New Schools Project, Phoenix Union High School District, Seattle Public Schools and Texas High School Project. A complete listing of YouthTruth high schools and the subset that were visited for this study can be found later in this appendix.

The schools were classified by type based on categories developed by CEP including charter schools, STEM schools, early college high schools, small or theme schools, and other (those schools that did not fit into any of the preceding categories). Most of the schools were relatively small. Of the schools that completed the online survey (N=76), 61 (80.3%) had student populations of 399 students or less, while 15 schools (19.7%) had populations of 400 students or more. Roughly two thirds of these schools (65.8%) had 51% or more of their students eligible for free and reduced price school lunches.

A complete list of the schools and their networks/school districts can be found below.

SCHOOL	NETWORK/DISTRICT
Alta Vista High School	LG-AZ
Apache Trail High School	LG-AZ
Ball Preparatory Academy of Science & Technology	THSP
Bertie County Early College High School	NCNSP
Bertie STEM High School	NCNSP
Blue Ridge Virtual Early College High School	NCNSP
Bostrom Alternative Center	PUHSD
Brunswick County Early College High School	NCNSP
* Buncombe County Early College High School	NCNSP
Caldwell Early College High School	NCNSP
Cape Hatteras Secondary School Of Coastal Studies	NCNSP
Cesar Chavez Academy High School	LG-MI
* Chief Sealth High School	SPS
Collaborative College for Technology and Leadership	NCNSP
* Crestview College Preparatory	THG-AZ
Cross Creek Early College High School	NCNSP
* Cyber High School	PUHSD
Denver School of Science & Technology	DPS
Desert Hills High School	LG-AZ
* Desiderata Program	PUHSD

Design Lab Early College High School	OSLN
Duplin Early College High School	NCNSP
Early College at Forsyth	NCNSP
East Wake School of Integrated Technology	NCNSP
Estrella High School	LG-AZ
Franklin Police & Fire High School	PUHSD
Frederick Douglass High School Center for Business and Entrepreneurship	APS
Frederick Douglass High School Center for Communications and Journalism	APS
Frederick Douglass High School Center for Engineering and Applied Technology	APS
Frederick Douglass High School Center for Hospitality, Tourism and Marketing	APS
George Washington Carver Early College High School	APS
George Washington Carver High School of Arts	APS
* George Washington Carver School of Health Sciences & Research	APS
George Washington Carver School of Technology	APS
Greene County Early College High School	NCNSP
* Haywood Early College High School	NCNSP
Hillside New Technology High School	NCNSP
Howard Health and Life Sciences High School	NCNSP
Hyde County Early College High School	NCNSP
J.P.Knapp Early College High School	NCNSP
Jacket Integrated Academy	NCNSP
Jackson Early College High School	NCNSP
Johnston County Early College Academy High School	NCNSP
Mabton High School	CSF
Manor New Technology High School	THSP
Math, Engineering, Technology & Science Academy	THSP
* Maya Angelou Public Charter School-Shaw Campus	MAPCS
Maynard Holbrook Jackson High School Early College Engineering	APS
Maynard Holbrook Jackson High School of Fine Arts & Media Communication	APS
Maynard Holbrook Jackson High School of Information Technology	APS
MC2 STEM High School	OSLN
Metro Early College High School	OSLN
* Miami Beach Senior High School	M-DCPS
Middle College High School At GTCC-Jamestown	NCNSP
NC A&T University Early/Middle College High School	NCNSP
Newton-Conover Health Science High School	NCNSP
Northampton County High School -West Project CART	NCNSP
Pender Early College High School	NCNSP
Peoria Accelerated High School	LG-AZ
Perkins High School	OSLN
PSJA T-STEM Early College High School	THSP
* Richardson Berkner STEM Academy	THSP
Rowan Early College High School	NCNSP

Sampson County Early College High School	NCNSP
School Of Inquiry And Life Sciences At Asheville	NCNSP
Scotland High School of Business, Finance and Marketing	NCNSP
Scotland High School of Health Sciences	NCNSP
Scotland High School of Leadership and Public Service	NCNSP
Scotland High School of Math, Science and Technology	NCNSP
Scotland High School of Visual and Performing Arts	NCNSP
South Atlanta High School of Computer Animation & Design	APS
South Atlanta High School of Health & Medical Sciences	APS
South Atlanta High School of Law & Social Justice	APS
South Atlanta High School of Leadership and Economic Empowerment	APS
* South Pointe High School	LG-AZ
South Ridge High School	LG-AZ
Southeastern Early College High School	NCNSP
Southern High School of Engineering	NCNSP
Stevenson High School	CSF
Sun Valley High School	LG-AZ
Suns-Diamondbacks Education Academy	PUHSD
The Early and Middle College at Bennett	NCNSP
Vance County Early College High School	NCNSP
Wayne School of Engineering at Goldsboro High School	NCNSP
West Phoenix High School	LG-AZ
*Woodrow Wilson Senior High School	DCPS

\* Denotes site visit schools

<p><u>Key to Network/District Abbreviations</u>          APS – Atlanta Public Schools          CSF – College Success Foundation          DCPS – District of Columbia Public Schools          LG-AZ – The Leona Group-Arizona          LG-MI – The Leona Group-Michigan          MAPCS – Maya Angelou Public Charter Schools          M-DCPS – Miami-Dade County Public Schools          NCNSP – North Carolina New Schools Project          OSLN – Ohio STEM Learning Network          PUHSD – Phoenix Union High School District          SPS – Seattle Public Schools          THSP – Texas High School Project</p>
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## APPENDIX B

### Exhibit B-1-1 OVERVIEW OF YOUTHTRUTH SITE VISITS SCHOOLS

SCHOOL TYPE*	% OF ALL YT SCHOOLS	PILOT YEAR NOT REPEATED	PILOT YEAR REPEATED	2009-2010 ROUND 1	2009-2010 ROUND 2	TOTAL
<b>Charter Schools</b>	15%	<u>Washington DC</u> Maya Angelou Public Charter School – Shaw Campus		<u>Phoenix AZ (Leona Group)</u> Crestview College Preparatory High School  South Pointe High School		<b>3</b>
<b>STEM Schools</b>	15%				<u>Texas</u> Richard Berkner STEM Academy	<b>1</b>
<b>Early College High Schools</b>	31%		<u>North Carolina</u> Buncombe County Early College		<u>North Carolina</u> Haywood Early College High School	<b>2</b>
<b>Small Schools</b> (formerly part of large school)	22%		<u>Atlanta GA</u> George Washington Carver School of Health Sciences & Research			<b>1</b>
<b>Other</b> (including traditional high school < 800 students)	13%			<u>Phoenix AZ</u> Cyber High School  Desiderata Program		<b>2</b>
<b>Other</b> (including traditional High School > 800 students)	3%	<u>Seattle WA</u> Chief Sealth High School  <u>Washington DC</u> Woodrow Wilson High School		<u>Miami FL</u> Miami Beach Senior High School		<b>3</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b><u>12</u></b>

**By State:** Arizona (4), North Carolina (2), Washington, D.C. (2), Florida (1), Georgia (1), Texas (1), and Washington State (1)

\* We sometimes used other approaches to categorizing YouthTruth high schools, but these were the categories we used for sampling purposes.

## APPENDIX C

### Brandeis Surveys

#### YouthTruth Evaluation Survey Center for Youth and Communities Brandeis University

Thank you for participating in the evaluation of YouthTruth being conducted by Brandeis University. The survey will provide valuable feedback for the Center for Effective Philanthropy and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and will be used in strengthening the YouthTruth process.

Please note that the survey is **voluntary** and that the information that you provide is **confidential**. No one other than the Brandeis University researchers conducting the survey will see your specific responses, and the reports that are produced by Brandeis will not attribute any comments to any identifiable individual. However, the survey will not be completely **anonymous**. We do ask for some basic identifying information (school name) so we can link the survey data to other information about your school (free lunch status, survey round, etc.). Nevertheless, we hope that you will answer the questions candidly and thoughtfully.

As noted in the cover letter for the survey, we are also offering a \$25 gift certificate to those individuals who complete the survey by the June 7<sup>th</sup> deadline. Once you have submitted the survey, you will be taken to a registration page where we will collect your contact information and your gift certificate preference.

Finally, please note that you can go back and change your answers on the survey at any point before you are done, using the “back” button on your browser. However, once you click on the “submit” button at the end, your answers are recorded and cannot be changed.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Professor Lawrence Neil Bailis from the Brandeis University research team at: [bailis@brandeis.edu](mailto:bailis@brandeis.edu).

Thank you for your prompt completion of this survey.

## SECTION 1: Introduction

For those schools that participated in YouthTruth twice, please think about your most recent experience with the project when responding to the questions on the survey.

1. Name of school (and academy, if applicable)

School/Academy: \_\_\_\_\_

2. What best describes your role in the YouthTruth process at your school this year?

- School Principal and YouthTruth Coordinator (i.e. both the Principal **and** the person with primary responsibility for coordinating the YouthTruth process)
- YouthTruth Coordinator (other than school Principal)
- School Principal (with a separate YouthTruth Coordinator at the school)

3. Which of the following activities did you personally participate in: (please check all that apply)

- The assembly or other approach that was used to introduce YouthTruth to our students
- The one hour follow-up call with CEP staff to review the YouthTruth results for our school
- The convening held by CEP staff in which participating schools had an opportunity to share challenges and best practices
- A discussion of YouthTruth results at a staff meeting or other school convening
- None of the above



## SECTION 2: Introduction of YouthTruth and YouthTruth Data Collection in Schools

4. How was YouthTruth introduced to students? (Please check all that apply)

- Assembly
- In individual classrooms
- Introduced by principal
- Introduced by outside speaker
- Introduced by classroom teachers
- MTV video shown
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the approach used at your school to introduce YouthTruth to students:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't Know
Was effective in explaining the purpose of YouthTruth to all or most of our students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was effective in providing motivation for all or most of our students to take the survey seriously and answer honestly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was more time consuming than we had anticipated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was worth the time it took	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Which month is the optimum time to administer YouthTruth in schools like yours? Please indicate your top 3 choices, checking "1st Choice," "2nd Choice," or "3d Choice" for the appropriate months. Please note: CEP needs 3 months to analyze data and create reports, so consider when you would like to receive the data back when answering this question.

	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May
1st Choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2nd Choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3rd Choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### SECTION 3: YouthTruth Feedback to Schools

7. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't Know
YouthTruth was more useful than most other surveys that are administered at our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The YouthTruth report was clear and understandable to me before the CEP staff explanation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found the qualitative feedback and quotations from students in the YouthTruth report to be helpful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The report highlighted clear and understandable themes and areas for potential improvement of our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The one hour phone call with CEP staff was useful in helping me understand the data in the report.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found the comparisons between our results and the results in other schools to be useful in identifying areas of strength and weakness in our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found the Executive Summary and Areas for Discussion in the report ("synthesized findings") helpful in prioritizing the issues that were raised through the YouthTruth survey.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7contd. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't Know
The convening I attended with other schools provided additional ideas on how to utilize the YouthTruth information beyond what was discussed in the YouthTruth report or the CEP phone call.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning about best practices and common areas for concern at other schools at the convening was helpful to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff from our network/district were helpful to me in interpreting the data and/or determining implications for our school (2009-2010 schools only)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It would be helpful to have more support to determine the implications of the YouthTruth data in planning changes in our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Going through the YouthTruth process helped to inform my efforts to improve our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The student comment tables provided helpful supplementary information to our YouthTruth report.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The abbreviated YouthTruth report that was prepared by CEP specifically for the students helped me prepare for sharing the YouthTruth results with our students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. The YouthTruth report included several sets of comparisons (with other schools and by grade within schools). Please let us know how useful each of the following comparisons in the YouthTruth report were to your school:

	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful	Not Applicable/ Don't Know
With all schools that have participated in YouthTruth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With schools in our district or network (2009-2010 schools only)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
By grade within our school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Can you think of any ways that the YouthTruth report, one hour phone call, and convening could have been more helpful to you?

- Yes
- No

10. If YES, please let us know how they could be made more helpful:

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## SECTION 4: Value of the YouthTruth Data

11. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't Know
The YouthTruth report provided me with new perspectives on our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The YouthTruth report helped to validate my beliefs about things that were going well or not going well at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was easy to use the YouthTruth report to determine the specific kinds of changes that would improve our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The data in the YouthTruth report will be helpful in building support for needed changes at our school among teachers and other school staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The data in the YouthTruth report will be helpful in building support for needed changes at our school among district administrators or network leaders.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Are there any topics that were **not** on the surveys that you would like to see included in future surveys?

- Yes
- No

13. If YES, what topics do you think should be added?

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## SECTION 5: Sharing YouthTruth Data at Your School

14. Have you already begun the process of sharing the YouthTruth data with others in your school community?

- Yes
- No [Go to question Q16]

15. If yes, to what extent have the data been shared with the following? (Please check all that apply)

	None	Some	Most	All
Teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guidance counselors and other staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Others (please specify below)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15a. If you checked "Others" please specify who you shared the data with.

Others \_\_\_\_\_

16. If you have **not** already shared the YouthTruth data, who do you **plan** to share the data with:

	None	Some	Most	All
Teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guidance counselors and other staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Others (please specify below)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16a. If you checked "Others" please specify who you shared the data with.

Others \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION 6: Use of YouthTruth Data at Your School

17. Please let us know the single **most important** issue at your school that was identified by the YouthTruth data.

Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

18. Would you say that it showed a strength of the school to be celebrated or highlighted an area where change is needed?

- Showed a strength
- Highlighted an area where change is needed
- Both
- Neither [Go to question Q20]

19. If the survey results **highlighted an area where change is needed**, how far along are your efforts to plan for and implement the change?

- We will develop a plan to address the issue next year.
- We are developing a plan to address the issue now.
- We are already addressing the issue.
- Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

20. In what ways have YouthTruth data been helpful to your school? For each of the following areas, please indicate if you **have already begun using** the YouthTruth data, if you **plan** to use the data, or if you **do not expect to use** the data.

	We have <u>already</u> begun using the data	We have not yet used the data, but <u>plan</u> to use it	We <u>do not expect</u> to use the data
Planning specific changes to our school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing our school improvement plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing marketing materials for our school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping us develop mechanisms for enhanced feedback from students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognizing staff for good work and congratulating them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prompting further discussions about school improvement with faculty and staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prompting further discussions about school improvement with students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (specify below)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20a. If you checked "Other" above, please specify how else you plan to use the YouthTruth data.

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21. What kinds of changes in your school have already occurred or are likely to occur as a **result** of your participation in YouthTruth? For each of the following areas, please indicate if change has **already** occurred, if you are **planning** to make changes (or will develop plans during the summer or early next year) if you **do not expect to make any changes**, or if the question is **not applicable/don't know**.

	Change has already occurred	Planning change that is likely to occur in the future	We do not expect any change in this area	Not Applicable/ Don't know
Physical infrastructure (e.g., buildings, grounds, bathrooms, lighting)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organizational and structural changes (e.g., block scheduling, teacher planning time, school mission)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Curriculum and instruction (e.g., academic classes, extracurricular activities active learning)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assessment and standards-based testing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional development for faculty and/or staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health and safety issues (e.g., bullying, drug and alcohol abuse)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships in the school (e.g., student-teacher, student-student)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discipline and school rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other kinds of change (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21a. If you checked "Other kinds of change" above, please specify those other areas of change.

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22. For each of the areas in which a change has already taken place or is planned as a result of YouthTruth, please provide a specific example the type of change that you expect or is already in place.

Physical infrastructure (e.g., buildings, grounds, bathrooms, lighting)

---

Organizational and structural changes (e.g., block scheduling, teacher planning time, school mission)

---

Curriculum and instruction (e.g., academic classes, extracurricular activities active learning)

---

Assessment and standards-based testing

---

Performance assessment of faculty and/or staff

---

Professional development for faculty and/or staff

---

Health and safety issues (e.g., bullying, drug and alcohol abuse)

---

Relationships in the school (e.g., student-teacher, student-student)

---

Discipline and school rules

---

Other kinds of change

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23. What types of **challenges** have made it difficult/will make it difficult to develop and implement plans for school change based on your YouthTruth report? (Please check all that apply)

- None
- Not enough time to plan
- We do not have the expertise to develop appropriate plans
- Other school change/school improvement priorities must come first
- We lack the resources to implement needed changes
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

24. What types of additional **support(s)** would be helpful in developing and implementing the plans for school change based on your YouthTruth report?

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## SECTION 7: Communications with CEP (Center for Effective Philanthropy)

25. To what degree to you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't Know
We received clear communications from CEP concerning the purpose of YouthTruth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We received clear communications from CEP about our roles and responsibilities for participating in YouthTruth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The CEP staff were very responsive to any questions we raised throughout the Youth Truth process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The YouthTruth materials were useful in terms of our planning to conduct the survey.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The YouthTruth materials were useful in terms of our planning to utilize the results of the survey.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The YouthTruth website is a helpful resource.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## SECTION 8: Overall Assessment of the YouthTruth Experience

26. To what degree do you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't Know
The YouthTruth process has been good for our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The CEP staff have been very helpful in our efforts to use data to improve our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend that other schools participate in YouthTruth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If possible, I would like our school to participate in YouthTruth again in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. How many times have you administered YouthTruth at your school?

- Once (go to Question 29)
- Two times (both the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years)

28. If you participated in YouthTruth both years, what were the benefits of participating in YouthTruth a second time? (please check all that apply)

- Easier to administer the second time
- Helped clarify trends in our school
- Yielded information about the impact of changes we made in response to our students' feedback the first time they took the survey
- There were no benefits to participating in YouthTruth a second time
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- N.A. (we only participated in YouthTruth once)

29. Do you have any other ideas or suggestions about ways that the YouthTruth process could be strengthened to provide useful information to school leaders?

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30. Would you be willing to discuss some of the ideas you shared in this survey in greater depth with a member of the Brandeis evaluation team?

- Yes
- No

31. If yes, please list your name, phone number and let us know what would be good times to call.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Best times to call \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.**

**Please press the “Submit” button when you are done.**

Once the survey is submitted, you will be taken to a separate registration page to for additional contact information so that we can send you your “Thank You” gift.



## APPENDIX D

### Additional Tables for Chapter Two

#### Exhibit D-2-1

#### METHOD OF INTRODUCTION BY TYPE OF SCHOOL

METHOD OF INTRODUCTION	TYPE OF SCHOOL									
	Charter (n=12)		STEM (n=12)		Early College (n=23)		Small or Theme (n=21)		Other (n=8)	
	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct
Assembly	2	16.7	3	25.0	10	43.5	12	57.1	3	37.5
Individual classrooms	6	50.0	6	50.0	11	47.8	5	23.8	2	25.0
MTV video	5	41.7	2	16.7	6	28.1	8	38.1	4	50.0

16.7% of charters schools used the assembly; 57.1% of small or theme schools used assembly to introduce YT to the students

#### Exhibit D-2-2

#### OPTIMUM IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUTH TRUTH BY MONTH (n=48)

MONTH	PERCENT WITH PREFERENCE	
	Number	Pct
September	3	6.3
October	9	18.8
November	5	10.4
December	5	10.4
January	13	27.1
February	8	16.7
March	2	4.2
April	2	4.2
May	1	2.1

27.1\* of school leaders report January as the optimum time for implementation of YouthTruth

## APPENDIX E

### Additional Tables for Chapter Three

#### Exhibit E-3-1

#### SCHOOLS' UTILIZATION OF YOUTH TRUTH DATA IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING ISSUES BY SCHOOL TYPE

ISSUES	TYPE OF SCHOOL											
	Charter (n=12)		STEM (n=12)		Early College (n=23)		Small or Theme (n=21)		Other (n=8)		Total (n=76)	
	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct	N	Pct
<i>Planning specific changes to school</i>												
Already begun using data	9	75.0	7	58.3	16	69.6	17	81.0	7	87.5	56	73.7
Have not yet used, but plan to	3	25.0	5	41.7	7	30.4	3	14.3	1	12.5	19	25.0
Do not expect to use the data	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.8	0	0.0	1	1.3
<i>Developing school improvement plan</i>												
Already begun using data	8	66.7	6	50.0	12	52.2	13	61.9	7	87.5	46	60.5
Have not yet used, but plan to	3	25.0	6	50.0	11	47.8	27	28.6	1	12.5	27	35.5
Do not expect to use the data	1	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	9.5	0	0.0	3	3.9
<i>Developing marketing materials</i>												
Already begun using data	6	50.0	1	8.3	5	22.7	4	20.0	1	12.5	17	23.0
Have not yet used, but plan to	3	25.0	8	66.7	16	72.7	10	50.0	4	50.0	41	55.4
Do not expect to use the data	3	25.0	3	25.0	1	4.5	6	30.0	3	37.5	16	21.6
<i>Developing mechanisms for student feedback</i>												
Already begun using data	3	25.0	3	25.0	7	31.8	8	40.0	5	62.5	26	35.1
Have not yet used, but plan to	8	66.7	9	75.0	14	63.6	11	55.0	2	25.0	44	59.5
Do not expect to use the data	1	8.3	0	0.0	1	4.5	1	5.0	1	12.5	4	5.4
<i>Recognizing faculty and staff work</i>												
Already begun using data	7	58.3	6	50.0	12	54.5	11	52.4	8	100	44	58.7
Have not yet used, but plan to	5	41.7	5	41.7	9	40.9	8	38.1	0	0.0	27	36.0
Do not expect to use the data	0	0.0	1	6.3	1	4.5	2	9.5	0	0.0	4	5.3
<i>Promoting discussion for school improvement with faculty and staff</i>												
Already begun using data	8	66.7	8	66.7	18	78.3	17	81.0	7	87.5	58	76.3
Have not yet used, but plan to	4	33.3	4	33.3	5	21.7	3	14.3	1	12.5	17	22.4
Do not expect to use the data	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.8	0	0.0	1	1.3
<i>Promoting discussion for school improvement with students</i>												
Already begun using data	4	33.3	6	50.0	14	60.9	10	47.6	6	75.0	40	52.6
Have not yet used, but plan to	7	58.3	6	50.0	8	34.8	10	47.6	2	25.0	33	43.4
Do not expect to use the data	1	8.3	0	0.0	1	4.3	1	4.8	0	0.0	3	3.9

9 charter schools (75%) have already begun using the YT data to plan specific changes in school

56 schools (73.7%) said that they have already begun using the YT data to plan specific changes in school

73 schools (98.7%) said that they have already begun or plan to use YT data to plan specific changes in school

**Exhibit E-3-2**

**USEFULNESS OF YOUTHTRUTH**  
(n=75)

<b>EFFORTS</b>	<b>FINDINGS ACROSS SCHOOLS</b>
	Pct
The YouthTruth process has been good for our school	94.7
YouthTruth helped to validate my beliefs about things that were going well or not at my school	92.0
YouthTruth provided me with new perspectives on our school	89.3



## APPENDIX F

### Additional Tables for Chapter Four

#### Exhibit F-4-1

#### YOUTHTRUTH SCHOOLS' EFFORTS IN PLANNING/IMPLEMENTING CHANGE BY SCHOOL TYPE

CHANGE AREAS	TYPE OF SCHOOL											
	Charter (n=12)		STEM (n=12)		Early College (n=23)		Small or Theme (n=21)		Other (n=8)		Total (n=76)	
	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct	N	Pct	n	Pct
<i>Physical infrastructure</i>												
Change has already occurred	1	12.5	1	9.1	1	6.7	2	1.8	1	20.0	6	10.7
Planning change likely to occur	3	37.5	2	18.2	4	26.7	4	23.5	0	0.0	13	23.2
We do not expect change	4	50.0	8	72.7	10	66.7	11	64.7	4	80.0	37	66.1
<i>Organizational/structural changes</i>												
Change has already occurred	1	10.0	4	33.3	2	9.1	9	45.0	2	25.0	18	25.0
Planning change likely to occur	7	70.0	5	41.7	6	27.3	5	25.0	3	37.5	26	36.1
We do not expect change	2	20.0	3	25.0	14	63.6	6	30.0	3	37.5	28	38.9
<i>Curriculum and instruction</i>												
Change has already occurred	4	36.4	3	25.0	5	21.7	7	35.0	3	42.9	22	30.1
Planning change likely to occur	6	54.5	7	58.3	16	69.6	11	55.0	2	28.6	42	57.5
We do not expect change	1	9.1	2	16.7	2	8.7	2	10.0	2	28.6	9	12.3
<i>Assessment/standards-based testing</i>												
Change has already occurred	2	20.0	1	10.0	2	8.7	3	15.8	3	37.5	11	15.7
Planning change likely to occur	4	40.0	6	60.0	8	34.8	8	42.1	3	37.5	29	41.4
We do not expect change	4	40.0	3	30.0	13	56.5	8	42.1	2	25.0	30	42.9
<i>Professional development</i>												
Change has already occurred	3	27.3	3	25.0	5	21.7	6	30.0	4	57.1	21	28.8
Planning change likely to occur	4	36.4	7	58.3	11	47.8	10	50.0	3	42.9	35	47.9
We do not expect change	4	36.4	2	16.7	7	30.4	4	20.0	0	0.0	17	23.3
<i>Health and safety issues</i>												
Change has already occurred	2	22.2	1	10.0	3	14.3	3	16.7	1	16.7	10	15.6
Planning change likely to occur	3	33.3	4	40.0	9	42.9	12	66.7	3	50.0	31	48.4
We do not expect change	4	44.4	5	40.0	9	42.9	3	16.7	2	33.3	23	35.9
<i>Relationships in school</i>												
Change has already occurred	5	45.5	4	33.3	4	17.4	8	38.1	5	62.5	26	34.7
Planning change likely to occur	2	18.2	7	58.3	16	69.9	12	57.1	3	37.5	40	53.3
We do not expect change	4	36.4	1	8.3	3	13.0	1	4.8	0	0.0	9	12.0
<i>Discipline and rules</i>												
Change has already occurred	6	54.5	4	33.3	6	28.6	7	41.2	3	50.0	26	38.8
Planning change likely to occur	3	27.3	7	58.3	12	57.1	9	52.9	3	50.0	34	50.7
We do not expect change	2	18.2	1	8.3	3	14.3	1	5.9	0	0.0	7	10.4

1 charter schools (12.5%) said that change has already occurred in school physical infrastructure

6 schools (10.7%) said that change has already occurred in school physical infrastructure

**Exhibit F-4-2**

**CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENT YOUTHTRUTH IN SCHOOLS**  
(n=76)

<b>EFFORTS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS</b>
Not enough time to plan	32.9
Other school change/school improvement priorities must come first	22.4
We lack the resources to implement needed changes	14.5
We do not have the expertise to develop appropriate plans	1.3
None	38.2
Other	11.8

## APPENDIX G

### References for Chapter Four

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