Youth Leadership Summit 2011:
Creating Community • Finding One Voice

Reflections & Insights
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About the Summit

Over the past several years, a number of youth leadership and youth development organizations have expressed a need for the community to come together to share best practices, to discuss the needs, gaps, and challenges facing this field, and to discover ways to work together. We believed this convening of a community of experts to be a necessary step in discovering, improving, and innovating ways to advance and respond to the demands in this field; all with the intention of reaching more youth and increasing the quality of programs offered.

In February 2010, representatives from City Year, Search Institute, Y-USA, Kiwanis International, and the Center for Creative Leadership assembled in Minneapolis to explore the possibility of convening a youth leadership summit to discuss and assess the field of youth leadership development and to create a vision for bringing together others with a shared commitment. When this group met, all five organizations expressed a need to...

- understand/evaluate what the community is doing and build a stronger system,
- begin building a shared knowledge base that captures best practices,
- create a community of practice, a connected field to serve more youth and improve programs,
- help young people everywhere have access to the best youth leadership experiences regardless of organization or costs, and
- inspire, energize and unleash the potential of this field and of young people.

Design and Objectives

Two pictures – Stars in the Sky, so many shining, lights of hope for youth...yet there are voids...
As planning progressed, it became clear that our objectives could be best served through a small, invitation-only, working conference, bringing together U.S. based national and international youth leadership organizations for dialogue. We identified a list of forty organizations that might be prime candidates for this event and discussed the types of participants we believed would benefit most—people with direct responsibilities for program development and/or implementation and those most closely involved with assessing the impact of programs.

Over the next year we drafted a design focused primarily on Open Space Technology®. We integrated into that design Future Scenario building, as part of an overall partnership between CCL and the Institute for the Future. The goals for the 2 1/2 day session were set forth as follows:

• To connect major youth leadership development organizations in a substantive “open space” conversation
• To share a youth leadership challenge or an innovation with the field
• To identify frontiers of theory and practice for the field of youth leadership

"Just like a pebble in a pond, the ripples can be quite mighty."

The Summit Begins

On March 23-25th, twenty-four youth leadership practitioners from sixteen organizations gathered at the CCL headquarters in Greensboro, NC for the 2 1/2 day Summit. We learned almost immediately that, in the language of Open Space, “whoever comes are the right people”

“I’m excited about the youthful voice that’s here – the young professionals who are coming at this with real zeal and passion and information.”
Youth Leadership Summit Participants

Mary Ackerman
Director of External Relations
Search Institute

Judith Bevan
Camp Director
American Camp Association

Gayle Brock
Youth Development Specialist
YMCA of the USA

Eileen Doyle
Vice President, Program
Girl Scouts of the USA

Faye Dresner
Director of Operations & Strategic Planning
Year Up-Atlanta

Devin Fidler
Research Manager, Technology Horizons Program
Institute for the Future

Paul Foster
Director, Publishing and Digital Initiatives
Jossey-Bass Publishers

Richard Honiball
Board of Trustees
Hugh O’Brien Youth Leadership

Katie Johnson
Field Office Director
American Camp Association

Max Klau
Director of Leadership Development
City Year, Inc.

Courtney Knies
Executive Assistant
Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership

Javier La Fianza
President and CEO
Hugh O’Brien Youth Leadership

April Mendez
Vice President for Leadership
Interfaith Youth Core

Connie Meyer
Director of Leadership Development
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Mark Moravits
Senior Manager, National Programs & Accounts
GenerationOn | The Points of Light Institute

Richard Peterson
Program Manager
Kiwanis International

Marcos Salazar
Research Analyst
Girl Scouts Research Institute

John Shertzer
Senior Director of Programs
Kiwanis International

Rachael Swanson
Director, Volunteer and Community Partnerships
U.S. Fund for UNICEF

Nancy Tellet-Royce
Senior Consultant
Search Institute

Ellen Van Velsor
Senior Fellow
Center for Creative Leadership

Joel Wright
Innovation Associate
Center for Creative Leadership

Preston Yarborough
Assistant Director, Office of Student Leadership & Service Learning
University of North Carolina-Greensboro
Why Are We Here?

Early in our time together, as a way of better understanding summit expectations, we each posted a 1-2 sentence statement of why we were here. Reasons ranged from “to recharge”, to “looking for collaborators”, to “learning from other YLD practitioners”, to “identifying best practices”.

Why Are We Here?

“to learn what others are doing and what is working” – “make new connections” – “to re-fuel”
“to collaborate with other youth-service professionals to enable us to reach more youth with positive leadership training”
“idea exchange, connection with other people and organizations and alignment of resources and projects”
“to understand more about how we are defining and approaching YL similarly or differently”
“to develop/explore emerging ways to introduce youth to servant leadership”
“to build relationships with colleagues and the organizations they represent”
“to feed my brain – take a time from the challenges of my own organization to think more broadly”
“to hear youth leadership development challenges and opportunities across a diverse range of contexts “
“I am interested in participatory process and learning. We are growing and I want to develop programs”

Warming Up

After welcoming comments, the group launched into a “fishbowl” dialogue to get things started. Three successive groups addressed these questions, in turn:

• **G1:** What, in your view, is most transformative about youth leadership development?
• **G2:** What are your greatest challenges as a youth leadership development practitioner?
• **G3:** What themes, connections, paradoxes, contradictions do you see across the first two discussions?
What’s Most Transformative about Youth Leadership Development

The discussion in group one went far to seed the thinking of groups that followed. Ideas touched upon included (1) the different motives that drive youth participation in leadership development activities, (2) the kinds of transformations seen in youth participating in leadership development experiences, (3) what elements of best practice seem most important to keep in mind, (4) the urgency and relevance of youth leadership development, and (5) the need for wider access to leadership development opportunities for youth.

Group one members noted that youth come to leadership development activities for a variety of reasons, and in the process have their understandings of themselves and of leadership transformed. With one of the programs (Year Up), youth join for economic reasons, but as they engage in work in their communities, they have the opportunity to come to see themselves as leaders and to further develop their identity and skills. Some of the more traditional leadership programs are more often attended by youth who already see themselves as leaders, providing us (practitioners) with the opportunity to help them better understand their current strengths and development needs in the context of their current and possible future leadership roles and responsibilities. Some youth who are drawn to service, however, often have negative perceptions of leadership and are motivated more to serve than to lead. However, these contexts provide us with opportunities to help youth see the leadership that exists in service and to help them improve their skills to lead in the groups with whom they work.

Participants remarked that it is often surprising how little it takes to unleash the leadership potential of youth. Identifying “sparks” – aspects of who you are as a human being and what your true interests and gifts are – has a powerful transformative effect, and various ways of “just asking” about this often gets the process started with youth. For so many youth, no one is asking, and yet these are the critical years for significant aspects of development to occur. Also important and transformative for youth
is value articulation and the connection to behaviors and skill development. Clarifying one’s own values, linked to but increasingly differentiated from those of family and peer groups, can transform the understanding youth have about why they have some of the conflicts they do, why they have developed some of the skills they have so far, and what behaviors may not be serving them well.

“I’ve seen with the young adults I work with that it takes only a small amount of exposure to these principles….a small opening in the door and once the person steps foot in the door, they are really able to take off.”

In addition, the impact youth leadership development has on those around them was worthy of note, in that our colleagues see changes in the ways adults perceive and understand youth and their potential for meaningful and important contributions. This change is one we see as critical because we know that adult support of youth development is key to many important and positive outcomes.

Identifying and using evidence-based best practices in youth leadership development was discussed as important because knowing an initiative is research-based does help to bring more youth into a program, and creates more interest among parents, educators, and of course funders. Using technology, not just for appearances or convenience (e.g., death by PowerPoint), but to make experiences and learning come alive through simulation and gaming, and to keep youth connected to each other and to mentors and staff, is something the group felt needs continual attention and improvement. Secondly, much discussion focused on the transformative impact of making sure the youth voice is heard in the design of leadership development programs, in service and civic engagement experiences, and in creating and providing access to real leadership opportunities.

Staying in touch with what youth want and how they see the world is vitally linked, in our thinking, to gaining the true and full participation of youth, rather than understanding youth leadership development as something adults do “to” or “for” youth.

That insight connected us to the increasing urgency we saw for leadership development among youth, as well as its growing relevance. Worldwide, youth take a central role in large-scale social change, as well as in day-to-day civic engagement and community service. Youth are changing the world and YLD can go a long way toward helping youth worldwide be a force for good. Leadership development plays a central role in helping youth connect what’s “inside” (personal values, skills, interests)
with what’s “outside” (local, national, global needs and opportunities for leadership and service), as well as helping younger generations develop the adaptability needed to effectively deal with the uncertainties of the future.

**What’s Most Challenging for Us as Practitioners?**

The challenges most on our minds as practitioners grouped in four areas: (1) overcoming current attitudes and social norms, (2) being adaptive and staying one step ahead, (3) defining youth leadership, and (4) developing shared meaning, and widening access. There was also discussion of various specific areas of practice individuals believe need further attention and improvement.

Our current culture, particularly in the U.S., is one that values speed, attention to surface issues, and short-term thinking. Leadership development, whether it is focused on adults or youth, is often counter-cultural and involves long gestation periods of in-depth reflection, and motivation towards working on personal changes. This disconnect between the demands of youth leadership development and the context in which youth live their lives makes practice difficult and requires us to be even more attentive to using technology and assessing impact, both in the short term and over time. In the view of some summit participants, it also relates to the need for a “business case” for youth leadership development. Although there was some discomfort with use of the term “business case”, there was appreciation for the idea that demonstrating high positive return on investment (of time and funds) is important for recruitment as well as for funders, and in efforts to incorporate youth leadership development into educational or other community systems. Being able to demonstrate how YLD helps people beyond the benefits of traditional education can work to mobilize further interest and enhance participation. And more specifically, demonstrating the importance of the leadership development aspects of service learning is also something that needs more focus in the immediate future.

The reality is many youth are in leadership roles now and are leading change around the world. Yet currently, access to youth leadership development is limited, so widening access — investing in youth early in their lives and worldwide — is a challenge, as well. Finding disenfranchised youth, gaining and maintaining their participation, and obtaining the financial support to reach out to distant and/or youth in poverty, who are incarcerated, or who live in remote areas of the world can be especially difficult, but is at the same time, vitally necessary. Technology can play a role here, but only in ways that are accessible to disenfranchised youth and only to the extent that we, as LD practitioners, can discover and implement best practices in this area. One way to increase access would be to increase efforts to embed leadership development opportunities and best practices throughout the systems and settings encountered by youth (church groups, schools, sports teams, etc.). Another method is to create and test leadership development methodologies, products, and initiatives that can “democratize” access to these experiences by making these scalable and affordable for individuals and groups worldwide. Efforts such
as this could increase access to leadership development for youth in the developing world as well as in countries where many youth already have access to more traditional opportunities.

“Being aware of this historical moment and what’s going on in Egypt and Tunisia….this kind of youth time bomb that people talk about, not just in the developing world but in the developed world…. Can we build a movement, can we create a field and share knowledge and experiences and disseminate them in some way that addresses what is really a global and important issue right now.”

Basically, wherever we work, a key question on our minds was how can we help to create or open up more leadership opportunities to youth and think about leadership development more in the context of supporting the enactment of real leadership responsibilities, rather than isolating our initiatives to classroom, camp, or event/program settings? How can we make service opportunities and other available youth leadership roles richer in terms of the leadership development support we provide to those contexts? We know that adults learn leadership primarily from real life experiences – work assignments, hardship experiences and developmental relationships, so how can we strengthen our youth leadership development practices in some of these same ways? How do we provide the space for youth to learn, grow, and possibly fail? These questions stimulated lively discussion about the anxiety youth leadership sometimes provokes in adults, having to do with a lack of adult confidence in the decision-making ability and judgment of youth, and the worry that youth leadership will bring about unwanted or unanticipated change. So working in that social context as YLD practitioners and handling our own concerns in that area is certainly a challenge we all bear in thinking about how to infuse more real leadership in YLD.

We are also challenged to go beyond our own current understandings of “best practice” and focus our thinking more on “next practices”. Being adaptive is of critical importance to the field of youth leadership development because youth will enter a world as adults that we can barely foresee now. We need to constantly be connecting what we do in our classrooms, camps, service projects, and
To become more adaptive, we first need to find common definitions or frameworks for youth leadership and youth leadership development. We tend to call everything “leadership” (e.g., community service, civic engagement, serving as a club officer, mentoring younger children), and we often frame YLD as preparation for future (adult) leadership roles and opportunities rather than development for enacting leadership in the present. Do we get in our own way? Identifying exactly where we differ in our current understandings, creating some shared meaning, and articulating best practice around youth and YLD seems important. Yet we recognized that the downside of any definitional process can be isolation and silos, to the extent that any one definition can exclude a portion of the group. This conversation led to mention of the need for a community of practice, meaning a loose-knit but ongoing network of practitioners intent on collaborating for the benefit and evolution of the field of YLD and youth worldwide.

Other issues of YLD content and methodology were on the minds of this group, including gender and other lenses on leadership, the role of ethics in YLD, providing the best environment for LD, and the power of play in the service of YLD. Using the Army (US Military Academy) framework of Be-Know-Do, one practitioner pointed out that “Be” is the most challenging part to implement with youth – meaning helping youth to foster a leader sub-identity at a time when this population is in the throes of major identity development work overall.

“With change accelerating the way it is, youth may be communicating with each other and using tools that people my age may not understand as well and may not be able to relate to always. There’s a communication gap that has always existed generationally and there’s a risk that that could expand.”
Group 3 was asked to focus on connections in what they had heard from the first two fishbowl groups, and to discuss themes standing out as important to this group so far. Their analysis was insightful, and provided a basis for starting the deeper discussion that occurred on day two of the summit.

**Theme 1:** Better integrating psychological development into YLD practice — What youth think good leadership is changes as they develop. Our programs and practices need to respond differently to youth who are at different stages of identity and leader identity development. There may not be one set of “best practices” because needs change with development. Adapting our approaches to level of development is a “meta” best practice.

**Theme 2:** Impacting educational systems — Although youth spend the majority of their day in school during a great proportion of the year, there is little opportunity for leadership development within the educational system in the United States. The focus of education is narrow, and growing narrower with each round of state and federal budget cuts. Figuring out how to soften that trend, educate teachers and school administrators about the importance of leadership development, and more effectively impact the educational curriculum nationwide should be a priority.

**Theme 3:** Desire for more collaboration across YLD organizations — Currently, youth leadership development organizations operate for the most part in silos. While we don’t feel a strong sense of competition with each other for youth participants given the large number of underserved individuals in the US and worldwide, we do recognize that the challenges we face are common challenges and that funding for our efforts is both critical and limited. We need more ways to share and partner across organizations and we need to have a stronger collective voice — in policy circles, in the media, and in other relevant domains. To do that, we first need to find it!
Theme 4: The difficulty of attracting youth to programs – We are aware of many reasons for this – competition for their time and interests, lack of peer support for participating in leadership activities, and the difficulty of making leadership tangible to youth who may not see real leadership opportunities in their present or future lives. Yet we also link the difficulty of attracting youth to programs to the fact that we teach what comes from yesterday to youth who will face new challenges tomorrow. We need to get a better handle on what are the developmentally appropriate “meta-competencies” for youth, find more effective ways to keep up with the what’s new, and do a more effective job of communicating the relevance of YLD to the youth audience.

Theme 5: Assessing impact of YLD - Linked to communicating relevance is being able to document the impact of YLD. Leadership development in general is a long-range outcome, unlike year-to-year academic skills. And the difficulty of measuring youth leadership effectiveness and/or youth leadership development is linked to the difficulty we have in defining those terms. Yet documenting impact is critical, both within and across various programs, not only for funding purposes but to strengthen our voice and to underscore the relevance for youth.

Theme 6: Incorporating leadership in YLD – Research on adults shows that leadership lessons are most often learned through direct experiences on the job, in community leadership roles, through mistakes and hardships, and by being in relationship to others. While classroom-based leadership development programs do play a role, people don’t have as much opportunity to attend programs as they do to learn from direct experience. Youth don’t have the same degree of real leadership opportunity. So, on the one hand, YLD programs can play a relatively greater role. However, if we want YLD to be relevant and attractive in the short run for youth, we need to find ways to better integrate real leadership responsibility with programmatic YLD. Yet society is polarized – wanting to protect youth and showing an inherent fear of youth leadership in terms of creating change we (adults) don’t want. Youth must navigate contexts in which adults have trouble power-sharing and how they currently do this is by using social media to create change. But is there a better way – a way to work across generations to create needed social change? How can youth leadership in a context of service be made more impactful?

Theme 7: Funding - Yes, yes, yes. The need is great and unmet! There is linkage here to the need for collaboration across organizations, partnering with educators, and being able to document impact.
“An exciting piece for me was listening to the conversation around the future, because so often, it is framed in youth work as a challenge, and to reframe it as an opportunity, to reframe it with some energy around what technology can bring to this field, how it will increase our ability to connect with young people in this field and to gain their voice……”

To kick off our first full day together, Devin Fidler, from the Institute for the Future, introduced the group to four “forces” that IFTF research shows are likely to impact our collective future. These forces are:

- Deep Diversity
- Digital Disruption
- Gamification
- Automation

(See Appendix, page 30, for descriptions of each of these forces.)

He also introduced the group to an IFTF model that very much represents what we are doing in the summit over these two days and hopefully beyond. His presentation of the Four Forces Impacting Youth Leadership Development would be seen as the first “foresight” session, while the work to be completed by the group during the bulk of the summit represents the “insight”, with “action” to occur in the weeks and months following.
Based on the three group sessions on Day 1, we started the real work on day 2 with an Open Space Technology® design focused on eight areas:

- Mapping leadership at different ages/Stages of YLD
- What does it mean to build a field of YLD?
- Strategies & tools for sustainability
- Measuring outcomes & benefits
- Engaging educators – embedding YLD in school curriculum
- Partnerships for funding YLD & Increasing technical resources
- Including the youth voice
- Supporting & increasing real time YLD opportunities – Youth leadership

The purpose of the Open Space session was to invite people to develop deeper insight on these main priorities and interest areas. The topics were posted around the room on individual flip chart pages with space for small groups to gather around each. The “rules” of Open Space ask participants to move about freely as their interests and personal learning agendas dictate, taking part in a small group discussion only as long as they feel they are making a contribution and learning. Approximately ninety minutes were devoted to this task in that first morning.

**Open Space Technology**

Four Principles and One “Law”

1. Whoever comes are the right people
2. Whenever it starts is the right time
3. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
4. When it’s over, it’s over

**“Law” of Two Feet**

If at any time you find yourself in any situation where you are neither learning nor contributing: Use your two feet and go someplace else. Don’t waste time.
Nearly every topic produced rich dialogue and surfaced important insights. The main points of each discussion are summarized briefly below.

**Mapping leadership at different ages/stages of YLD**

- YLD would be improved by a more consistent and well-informed use of a developmental continuum, defining differences in what leadership looks like at different ages and how YLD can be supported across the developmental continuum. Creating a “map” of what leadership skills are important and what developing those should look like at different ages would be a huge leap forward, as would measuring and comparing outcomes of various programs and approaches across this continuum.

- In working with youth, we need to be using the cognitive leadership frames of specific age groups, rather than trying to use/explain adult frameworks. Youth at different stages of leader identity development, regardless of age, will derive differing and distinct experiences from the same program. We need to focus both on developing skills or competencies and on developing leader identity. These are mutually reinforcing.

- An important issue is knowing how to not take leadership away from youth, at any age and how to best use/create opportunities for youth leadership that foster development, seeing youth not just as leaders of tomorrow but also facilitating their leadership today. Real leadership opportunity is a vital context for YLD. Don’t forget – youth really do get it, and we can do a better job of eliciting it and supporting it. A good practice is to engage youth in “leadership” opportunities with younger youth. Remove “baggage” of leadership - Make it cool. Think of the one room schoolhouse – reducing or eliminating our role as “teachers”.

- Because youth tend to move in and out of YLD experiences, programs need to develop skills incrementally but also facilitate initial entry at any point in the progression.

- It is important to help youth understand the leader and leadership distinction because youth often can/do enact leadership outside of formal leader roles (without formal authority).

**What does it mean to build a field of YLD?**

Building the field of YLD involves all of the following critical elements:
• Creating an organizing structure, a cohort, or an association of leaders to connect and exchange ideas, to have a voice, and to break down silos.

• Developing a literature base for scholarship, practical application, and communication, both internal to the field and externally across disciplines and practice areas. One idea is to capture the frontline youth worker experience and thereby elevate the position of frontline youth, making sure to focus on the global nature of the YLD field.

• Doing something together – moving to action – choosing 2-3 specific issues on which to focus and make progress together over the next 4-6 months. There is an urgent need.

“There is a realization in the room that we are strong together – that there’s a lot that can be done across organizations to amplify one another. That’s a very exciting thing to see.”

What strategies and tools do we need for sustainability?
All of the following were seen as important and interrelated to sustain the momentum we saw building during the summit.

• Funding – identifying the best ways to achieve this given the fiscal environment; partnerships across organizations to increase opportunities – perhaps a whole community “ask”

• Awareness building – about the urgency of YLD, about current best practices and documentation of positive impact. Demonstrating the “business case” for YLD

• More clearly identifying 21st century leadership and YLD needs – what is changing and what meta-competencies should be our focus?
How can we measure the outcomes impacts & benefits of YLD?

• Measurement tools - making evaluation of impact easier and more widespread

• We need to better identify what a successful YLD program looks like – what skills at each stage of development, what ways to assess leader identity development. When we know this, we can then know what to measure. We know “finding self” is key; problem identification/discovery may become more important.

• YLD so often includes civic engagement/service learning so we need to be better able to measure the impact of those activities, on the youth themselves, as well as on the communities and organizations served.

• It is important to learn more about tracking causality – what impact results from leadership opportunities youth may have, what impact results from programmatic initiatives, what impact from mentoring, etc. The better our evaluation outcomes, the stronger our voice will be and the more results we will be able to achieve for youth worldwide.

• It is also important to track impact longitudinally – what youth do when they leave your program, over time, and in their careers. It becomes more difficult as time goes on, but it is important to make strides in this area.

• Involve funders: what evidence is most critical evidence for a variety of funders and what are the differences in needs/interests across funders?

How can we engage educators in conversations about what youth leadership development can offer to the mutual goal of “whole child” development?

• One important strategy is to get educators to next summit, with a clear need to think of the current summit as the “first annual”.
There is strong support for this idea, including holding another summit with youth invited to participate, creating processes to seek youth input on program design, partnering in other ways with youth especially with technology innovations and what would engage youth and keep engagement high.

How can we include youth voice/presence in YLD?

There was strong support for this idea, including holding another summit with youth invited to participate, creating processes to seek youth input on program design, partnering in other ways with youth especially with technology innovations and what would engage youth and keep engagement high.

We can do a lot more in terms of connecting with Teach for America and also connecting to the charter school movement. Where it may be difficult to get YLD integrated into the regular public schools, the charter school movement might provide entree. The home school movement may also present an opportunity. This links to the next item below.

Find funding to train teachers with leadership “kits” = tools/curricula that will benefit them and could also be used by them to do YLD in their classrooms. Work directly with teachers and with students in presence of teachers; demonstrate how to weave LD into curriculum.

We could learn more from and connect with the African Leadership Academy. They have successfully blended traditional education and YLD in an African context. There may be some lessons here for the US, and certainly for working more to integrate education and YLD internationally.

Partner with educators/schools to seek funding for developing some of these projects
  - Making leadership part of “standard course of study”
  - Integrating technology to support YLD in schools
  - Creating a website for parents, educators, business people to access information about YLD and supporting YLD

Identify kindred spirits who want to see more leadership development in schools and bring them into our circle. These could be people who are currently involved in YLD or others (educators, funders, other nonprofits, etc.).
• We can do more ourselves in terms of engaging in reverse mentoring, and can include more of that in program designs. There was a discussion about the term “reverse” mentoring, suggesting the use of that term implies the “right” way to mentor is adult-to-youth. The term “reciprocal mentoring” was suggested as more appropriate.

• This group exchanged ideas about what more we can do to inform youth about the various opportunities for YLD and about its importance.

“Younger leaders will play more significant roles earlier in their lives than we’ve probably ever seen before. That puts a tremendous amount of responsibility on us to develop these leaders as effectively as we can.”

How do we support youth leadership development where it’s taking place?

• One of the most frequent contexts for youth leadership is as part of civic engagement and service learning opportunities. We need to expand our work and our knowledge base to enhance the developmental support and impact of these leadership experiences and to better integrate leadership and learning.

• This can be thought of as turning YLD on its head, in the sense that we are now more in a program mode – thinking of YLD as programs, rather than as support to leadership opportunities. Let’s get YLD out of the classroom. Can we get beyond a “program” framework (e.g., use “programs” to help youth reflect on leadership experiences, test new approaches, do planning)?
Technology Group

One group formed spontaneously to think about how to engage young people with technology in a leadership development context. To do this well, suggestions included needing to use our collective purchasing power, using consultants, creating a survey platform, connecting the operations and technical people from our organizations, and linking to each other on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. It was decided that this will be an ongoing group focused on these issues and tasks.

From Signals to Scenarios…..What If?

“…what a great way to begin to be able to think about things…..being on the lookout for signals and thinking, “Huh! Where would those lead us if we really thought about them?”

Our second afternoon together began with the introduction of some tools from Institute for the Future. Devin walked us through three steps for basic foresight: Signals, Forecasts, and Scenarios. We talked about looking for “signals” in our environments – events that cause us to say “Huh!?” or “Hmm....” – and to think about where those may lead us if we were to allow for the possibility of those less frequent events becoming more widespread.
He introduced us to four forecasts that can be used to frame this kind of imagining.

**Growth** A future that manifests the results of current trends and conditions, extrapolated forward. This includes both positive and negative growth. Continued economic growth is the basis for the “official” view of the future held by most governments and organizations.

**Collapse** A future in which major social systems are strained beyond the breaking point, causing system collapse and social disarray. Human organization returns to basic needs in order to rebuild. Global environmental collapse due to increased atmospheric and oceanic carbon dioxide levels is one example.

**Discipline** A future in which a core guiding value or purpose is used to organize society and control behavior. For example, if continued economic growth inevitably leads to collapse, then mandating changes to the system and putting limitations on certain kinds of human behavior (discipline) is a proposed solution. China’s one-child policy is an example of a discipline solution to population growth.

**Transformation** A fundamental reorganization of a society or system that signals a break from previous systems. The shift from nomadic hunter-gathering societies to stable, hierarchical agricultural societies was one of the most profound transformations in human history. Greater-than-human machine intelligence, and the revolution this would entail, is a popular transformation scenario.

Our assignment for the early afternoon was to return to the morning discussion that most interested us and work with others to broaden our thinking using these ideas and tools. For example, if our goal is to engage educators in YLD, what might that look like (what might we be doing, what would our approach be) if our economy were to enter a period of significant growth? What could we do in this domain if our economy were to collapse? What could we do in a period of fiscal discipline? And finally, what might our opportunities be if the educational system were for any reason to enter a period of significant transformation? These discussions provided rich detail, new insights, and opened up new ways of thinking about the possibilities — all work which led nicely to our afternoon debrief. The scenario building tools we used are included in the Appendix of this report, courtesy of IFTF.

To capture some of this thinking and to get us back in an imaginative space at the end of an afternoon of hard work, we followed a break with a spirited brainstorming session around the question “What if.......”
What if......

• YLD became part of the education system?
• The online power of youth toppled everything – how would that change our work?
• We had to help older folks remain relevant?
• We could balance the wisdom and expertise of different generations?
• We had true collaboration with youth?
• We stopped acting as if the online world is a separate and not “real” world?
• Nothing changed?
• We maximized what each system in an ecosystem of YLD does best?
• We had a community “map” and didn’t duplicate efforts?
• The education system was 60% academic subjects and 40 % “extracurriculars”
  and parents/youth had more choice?
• There were extensive collaborations between YLD practitioners and the corporate sector?
• We continued and expanded these summits at CCL and included corporate representatives, educators, youth, funders?
• We could harness the best of youth leadership (e.g. idealism) for benefit of adults/adult LD?
• We could capture and elevate the youth worker experience, inspire and develop them?
• We operated as more of one voice for YLD?
• We were measuring a few common outcomes across systems?
• We had longitudinal and comparative evaluation data?
• We amassed our collective stories of impact?
• We had a strong, well-articulated “business case” for YLD?
• Scholarship were enhanced in this field?
• Practitioner development was more readily available?
• Innovation was our primary agenda?
• We really used the power of this group/a unified front, talking externally?
• We created an identity and broadened the community?
• We included an international voice?
• We focused more on advocacy for youth or helped with youth organizing?
Community Sharing & Connecting

“Seeing all these people with their minds and their hearts in the right place is truly inspiring.”

The reception that evening offered an opportunity for the various organizations to display brochures, program catalogs, videos, and other materials that best represent what they feel they do best. These pictures capture some of the wonderful materials offered there, as well as the camaraderie.
A Community of Practice Takes Shape

Our highest aspiration during the summit planning stages was that participants would be so engaged and see such a need for collaboration and partnership that support and enthusiasm for a community of practice would emerge by the end of these two and a half days, and that this group or a subset of it would carry on from here with projects, funding proposals, ongoing communication and future contacts. And that is exactly what came about.

We agreed the community of practice, which starts here with us, should grow to include others interested in these initial goals:

• Building a body of research
• Identifying and communicating best practices and “next” practices
• Holding future conferences and finding other ways to share experiences and information about what works and what doesn’t work
• Finding increasingly innovative ways to work collaboratively
• Creating shared understanding, definitions, and frameworks around youth leadership and youth leadership development
• Developing innovations in methodology and practice
• Sharing curricula
• Finding new ways to engage families and parents and creating easier involvement options for youth and their families
• Securing a planning grant that would allow us to prepare for a meta-level evaluation program across the field

The group requested that the original planning committee for the summit serve as an ongoing coordinating committee for this community.
Next Steps

I. Defining & Differentiating: Youth Leadership and Youth Leadership Development
One theme that was repeated throughout the summit was the need to create more shared understanding of the difference between and intersection of youth leadership and youth leadership development. This goes beyond definitional work to expanding our thinking about how youth leadership development best happens and the contexts in which we expect youth to be leading, now and in the future. A number of summit participants who self-identified as particularly interested in this meaning-making work volunteered to carry us forward on this task.

II. Building a Partnership for Outcome Evaluation
One clear indicator of the sense of community built during the summit was the need, articulated by virtually all summit participants, to better understand the high-level impact of YLD and to have such information at our disposal for communication purposes towards enhancing our voice as a field. Our group decided to form a team to look for and write a planning grant for the development of a large scale, cross-organization study of the impact of YLD. We believe this is an important and needed project, and a great way to begin working in a collaborative mode to produce data that will be relevant to each one of us, to other practitioners, and to the larger field.

III. A Technology Task Force was Formed with the Charge of Creating a Way for Us to Keep Connected

IV. A Commitment to Future Meetings was Created and a Small Team Charged with Organizing

“Actually having this group together is more powerful than we could have dreamed. The wisdom that is in the room, the ideas that are being shared, the collective that will do something with this and not make this a one-time event that has no outcomes really affirms to me that this was the right conversation to have and the right people showed up to have it and that something will come from it.”

This statement from one participant echoed the feelings of many – that coming together to share best practices, to discuss the needs, gaps, and challenges facing the field of youth leadership development,
and to discover ways to work together, was exactly the right thing to do. We shared a strong sense that we do have a common vision, but need one strong voice, across our nation and around the world, in order to most effectively discover, improve, and innovate ways to reach and serve more youth with high-quality leadership development opportunities. And we left this first gathering committed to moving this vision forward together.

“In the end, although we all drive different vehicles, we are all heading to the same destination — and that is increased engagement of young people in this thing called leadership.”

Appendices

Tools & Resources

Member Web sites:

American Camp Association: http://www.acacamps.org/
Center for Creative Leadership: http://www.ccl.org; http://www.LeadBeyond.org
City Year: http://www.cityyear.org
GenerationOn/Points of Light: http://www.generationon.org
Girl Scouts of the USA: http://www.gssusa.org; http://www.girlscouts.org/research/
Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership: http://www.greenleaf.org
Hugh O’Brian Youth Leadership: http://www.hoby.org
Institute for the Future: http://www.iftf.org
Interfaith Youth Corps: http://www.ifyc.org
Kiwanis International: http://www.kiwanis.org
Search Institute: http://www.search-institute.org/
UNC-Greensboro/ Office of Leadership & Service Learning: http://olsl.uncg.edu/
Year Up: http://www.yearup.org
YMCA: http://www.ymca.net/
A guide to understanding alternative futures ...

Every culture (and every person) has its own image of what the future will be like. For looking at the future of youth leadership, we can apply a useful categorization scheme from a deductive forecasting technique called Alternative Futures. In this framework, the four categories of alternatives, or scenario archetypes, are growth, collapse, discipline, and transformation.

Today, we will use these scenario archetypes to explore some of the possible alternative futures for youth leadership.

GROWTH
A future that manifests the results of current trends and conditions, extrapolated forward. This includes both positive and negative growth. Continued economic growth is the basis for the “official” view of the future held by most governments and organizations.

COLLAPSE
A future in which major social systems are strained beyond the breaking point, causing system collapse and social disarray. Human organization returns to basic needs in order to rebuild. Global environmental collapse due to increased atmospheric and oceanic carbon dioxide levels is one example.

DISCIPLINE
A future in which a core guiding value or purpose is used to organize society and control behavior. For example, if continued economic growth inevitably leads to collapse, then mandating changes to the system and putting limitations on certain kinds of human behavior (discipline) is a proposed solution. China’s one-child policy is an example of a discipline solution to population growth.

TRANSFORMATION
A fundamental reorganization of a society or system that signals a break from previous systems. The shift from nomadic hunter-gathering societies to stable, hierarchical agricultural societies was one of the most profound transformations in human history. Greater-than-human machine intelligence, and the revolution this would entail, is a popular transformation scenario.

Getting started with scenarios

The basic tools for building a view of the future are signals, forecasts and scenarios. For this exercise, your group will be using the signals that we have been discussing to create scenarios for the future of youth leadership from individual forecasts. You will be given some signals to get you started.

Using the scenarios worksheet, for each signal write a separate forecast for growth, collapse, discipline and transformation in the appropriate columns. Finally, come up with a general description of each column that incorporates as many of these signals as you can logically fit together.
Four Forces that will Impact Our Future (Institute for the Future)

**Deep Diversity** - in an increasingly complex world, the understanding of diversity will go beyond what we currently recognize to the molecular level, facilitating medical breakthroughs and the possibility of other new kinds of connections between people.

**Digital Disruption** - the idea that digital power is increasing at an exponential rate, creating capabilities and potential currently unrecognized and even unimaginable, and fostering a generation of “digital natives” who have never experienced any other world.

**Gamification** - the increasing amount of time people (especially youth) spend on gaming, the increasing use of games in all domains of life, and how games can make us better and change the world.

**Automation** - the increasing use of robots in all areas of life, how people will change the way they interact with the robotic world, how we will change the way we think about our roles versus the use of robotics going forward.
Selected Reading List


Group Photo: Youth Leadership Summit, March 2011, Greensboro, North Carolina

Bottom row (Left to Right): Ellen Van Velsor, Mary Ackerman, Judith Bevan, Connie Meyer, Javier La Fianza, Sarah Miller. Middle row: Janet Carlson (coordinator), Preston Yarborough, Gayle Brock, Faye Dresner, Nancy Tellett-Royce, John Shertzer, Richard Peterson, Devin Fidler, Max Klau, Elaine Doyle, Joel Wright. Top row: Laura Weber (coordinator), Richard Honiball, Marcos Salazar, April Mendez, Courtney Knies, Rachael Swanson, Paul Foster, Katie Johnson, Mark Moravits
Acknowledgements

We would like to express special appreciation to Kiwanis International for their financial support of the Youth Leadership Summit. They have provided funds that would help offset a higher fee for all involved and helped to provide scholarship funds for those who expressed the need.

Thank you Kiwanis International for enabling all of us to gather, learn and discover ways that collectively we can do more for the benefit of youth everywhere.

KIWANIS is a global organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world one child and one community at a time. Founded in Detroit in 1915, Kiwanis currently has adult and youth clubs in 70 nations throughout the world and over 600,000 members.

Founded in 2005, Kiwanis Key Leader is a weekend, experiential leadership event that has served more than 13,500 high school students throughout the United States, Canada, Malaysia, Cayman Islands, Brazil, and El Salvador. The program is based in the teachings of servant leadership from Robert Greenleaf, and deals with five core themes – integrity, growth, respect, community and excellence.

Key Leader is part of Kiwanis Service Leadership Programs that offer programs for all ages – Key Club for high school students, Circle K for collegians, Builders Club for middle school students, Kiwanis Kids for elementary students, and Aktion Club for adults with disabilities. Each program is sponsored by a local Kiwanis club that offers adult mentors and funding to assist the student group.

We also want to acknowledge the work and cooperation of several people in making this first Youth Summit happen. Many thanks go to our facilitators Joel Wright (CCL), Nancy Tellett-Royce (Search), and Ellen Van Velsor (CCL), to the Center for Creative Leadership for providing the venue, and to those from CCL who provided great support to the event: Janet Carlson, Laura Weber, and Joan Bello. And finally, thanks also go to the planning committee and their organizations for being behind this effort from the very beginning – Dick Peterson (Kiwanis), Gail Brock (YMCA), Max Klau (City Year), Joel Wright & Ellen Van Velsor (CCL), and Nancy Tellett-Royce & Kristen Johnstad (Search Institute).