



Why Youth Empowerment Matters: What We Know

Building upon a legacy of youth-inspired social change, GENYOUth is breaking new ground in elevating students as change-agents for school and community wellness. *Why? Because the need for change has never been more urgent — or the opportunities to help more available.*

Excerpted from the GenYOUTH report:

"Empowering Youth! Students as Change-Agents for Wellness in Schools and Communities", 2015

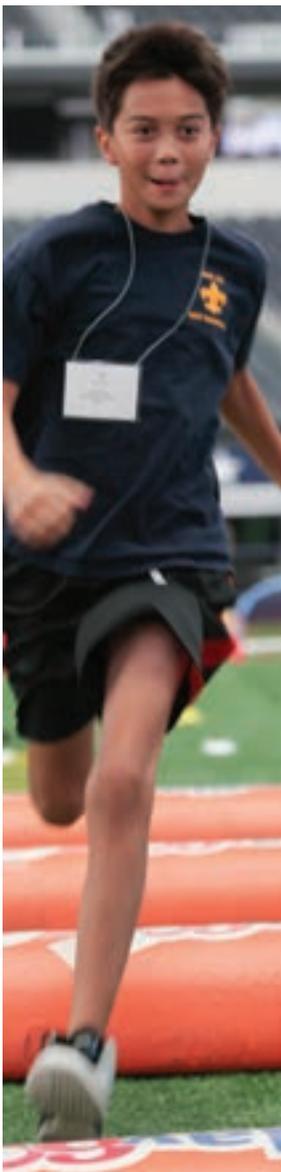
View the full interactive report online at www.GENYOUthFoundation.org.



What We're Learning

GENYOUth has gained insights and drawn conclusions around elevating and enabling youth to improve school and student wellness, drawing on our growing inventory of youth conversations and interviews, the results of student surveys and program utilization surveys, findings from Student Ambassador Summit events, reports of student focus group sessions, insights from youth advisory group gatherings, and more. Here's some of what we're currently learning.

What changes happen when students are involved in creating healthier schools?



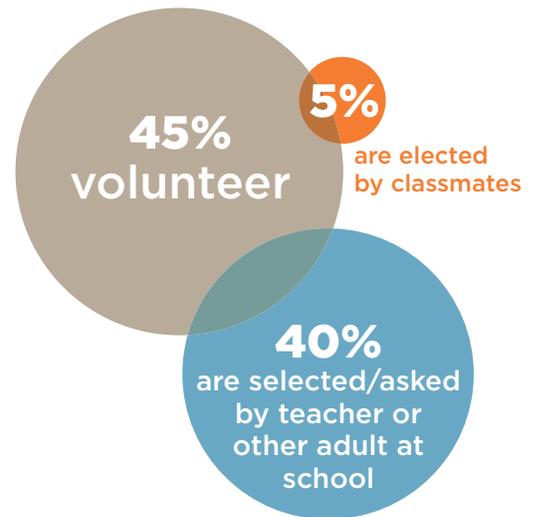
Schools with higher levels of student involvement are notably more likely to:

- Implement school-wide actions to improve the healthy eating and physical activity environment.
- Have more adults involved in school wellness efforts.
- Stay engaged with wellness activities and improvements.

More students are aware of and involved in creating healthier schools when:

- One or more student leaders help to engage their peers.
- One or more adults is a wellness champion at school.
- Physical education and school nutrition leaders support school wellness improvement efforts.
- Proper nutrition and physical activity are an important part of the school culture.
- There is a strong wellness policy.
- Parent volunteers support healthy changes at school.
- Mini-grants have been provided to jumpstart healthy changes.

How do students become wellness leaders at school?



Based on 2014 Fuel Up to Play 60 student survey.



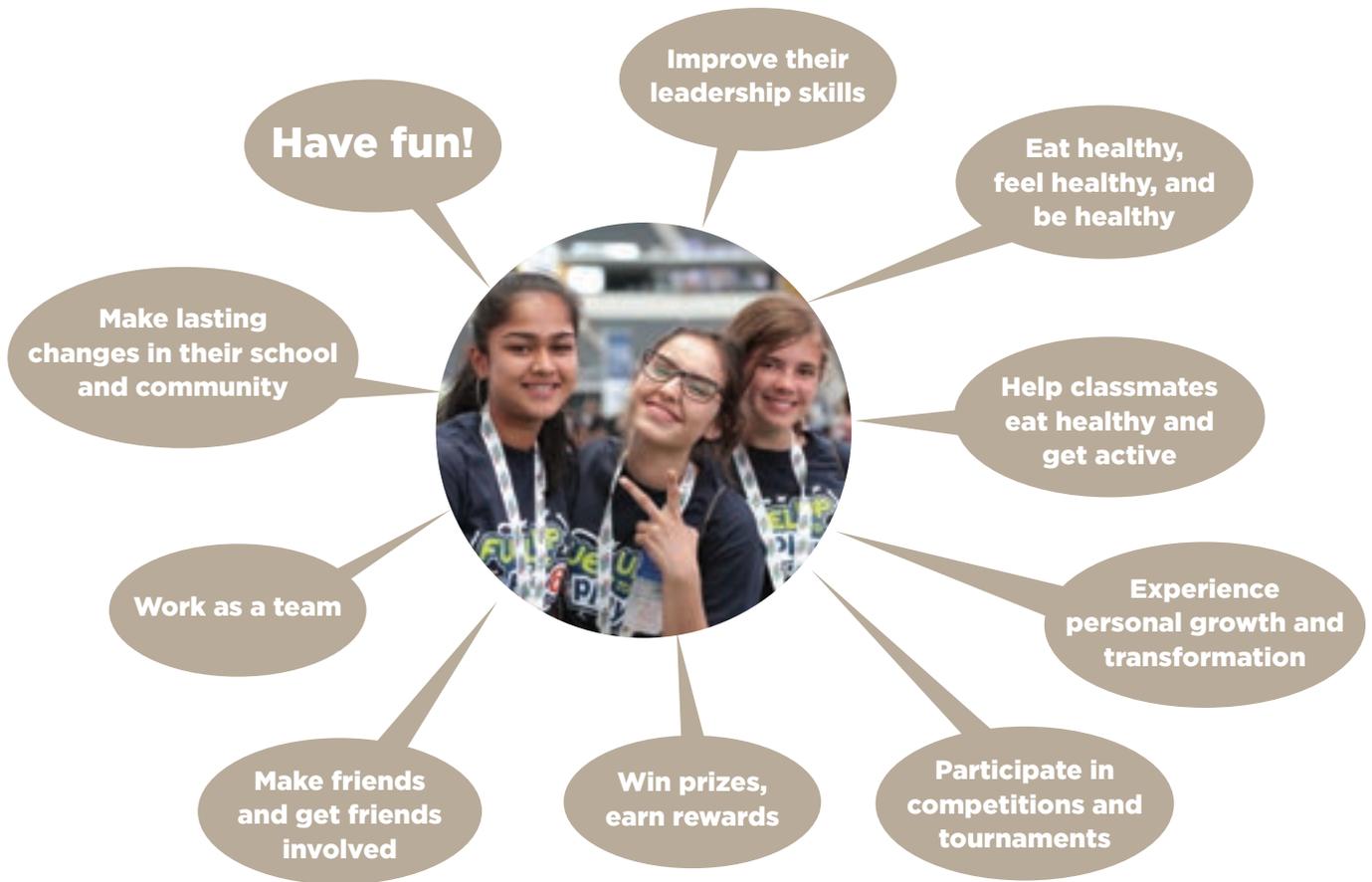
“Who better to make decisions than the ones who will live with the consequences of those decisions? In my experience, youth are more likely to follow what their peers say than instructions from adults.”

Chris, age 14, Richland High School, Washington

Data are from annual Fuel Up to Play 60 Utilization Survey conducted online with enrolled K-12 educators/staff (n=-10,000/year representing about 8,000 schools). Data are statistically weighted to correct for non-response and sample bias.

Why do students lead school wellness efforts?

Youth want to be leaders for healthier schools and students because they like to . . .



What do students need to become better leaders?

To help them lead healthy changes in schools, students say they want:



Leadership training and more opportunities to act in leadership roles

Training in communication skills, including public speaking and using social media

Access to mentors and peer-learning opportunities

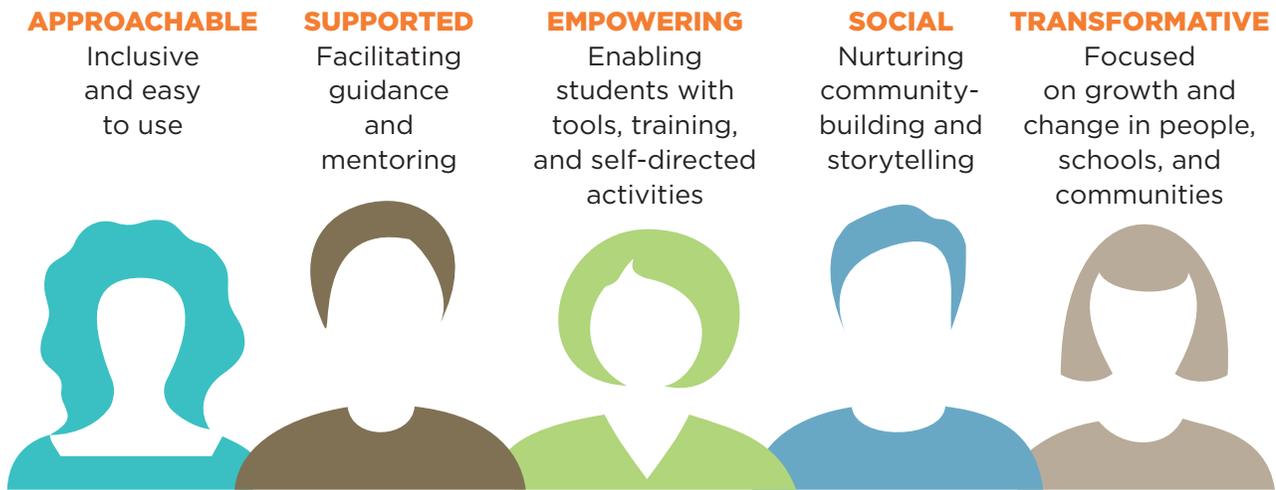


“To feel connected, youth want to be involved. I know the adults in my life care about me, but it’s when they involve me in making decisions or solving problems that I really want to make a difference.”

Hunter, age 17,
Mountain View High School, Idaho

Page 10 data based on focus groups and surveys with Fuel Up to Play 60 Student Ambassadors.

What, according to youth, are the necessary characteristics of successful youth-led initiatives?



What motivates – and challenges – students as change-agents?



Page 11 data based on ethnographic research conducted in 2014 with middle and high school students across the U.S. as part of GENYOUth's AdVenture Capital program. Done in collaboration with gravitytank™ Innovation Consultancy.