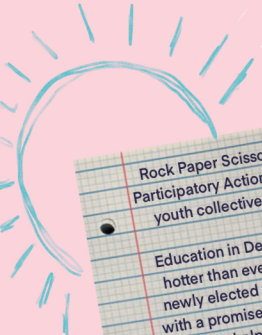


Rock Paper Scissors

A Playful Examination of Humanity in Detroit
Schools

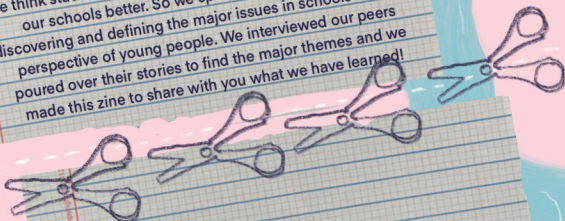




Rock Paper Scissors documents the learnings from a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project by 482Youth, the youth collective of 482Forward, and People in Education.

Education in Detroit has long been a hot topic. Recently it's hotter than ever, with a newly minted school district and a newly elected school board all working to improve schools with a promise of transformation. However, where are young people in helping to make decisions and defining success in this transformational moment?

We think students should be at the heart of any effort to make our schools better. So we spent the summer of 2019 discovering and defining the major issues in schools from the perspective of young people. We interviewed our peers poured over their stories to find the major themes and we made this zine to share with you what we have learned!



Rock Paper Scissors

Define Research
Question and Develop
Interview protocol



Document
Findings
(creating Zine!)



Our Process



Data Collection
(Interviews with
students)



.....
Data Analysis
(Finding themes)



Research Squad

A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH STUDY BY:

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college junior 21 y/o; has
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years

A partnership
between
482forward and
people in
education

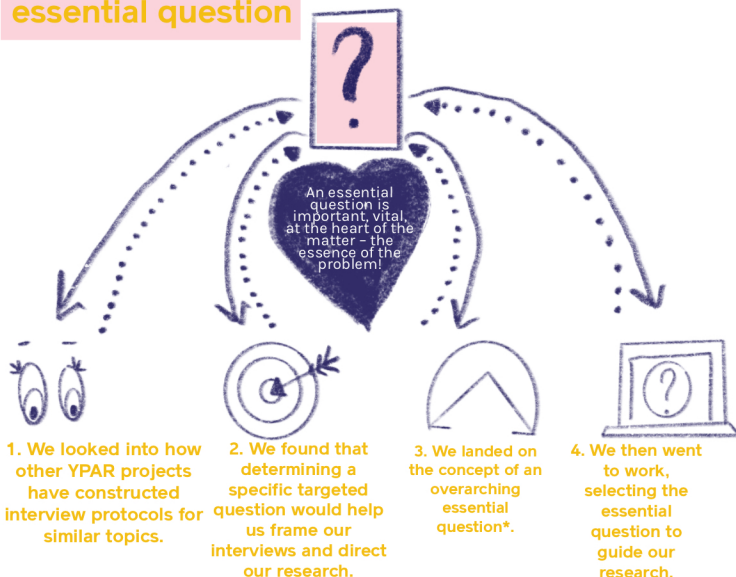
People in Education

482Forward

People in Education (PIE) is a media arts organization committed to humanizing schooling by facilitating space for connection, curiosity and reflection. PIE's Artist in Residence program partners media artists with learning spaces to facilitate student-led community investigations exploring complex community issues, which culminate in a collaborative media project.

482Forward is a citywide education organizing network in Detroit. We are neighborhood organizations, parents and youth committed to ensuring that all Detroit children have access to an excellent education, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. Together, we are building power to make systemic change and win educational justice for our communities.

Our first step in the research process was defining an essential question



During previous research on the Blackfoot People's understanding of the path of self actualization, we realized that schools are often not addressing basic human rights, effectively creating inherently inhumane environments. To understand this issue more holistically, we decided to ask the question: what about school is inhumane?

INHUMANE

Oxford Definition:

In-hu-mane

/ˌɪn(h)ˈyoʊˈmān/

adjective

Without compassion for misery or suffering; cruel. "confining wild horses is inhumane"

student definitions:

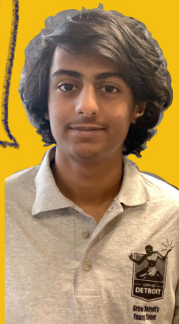


"Defining inhumane should go by this: it does not abide by criteria that meet the needs of the human(s) and respect their civil and human freedoms." -America Yahya

"Depriving a person of individuality and their basic necessities to live." -Valeria Rios-Hernandez



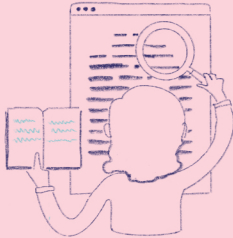
"Inhumane is immoral and unethical treatments."
-Wally Alhomaiddi



Data Collection and Analysis:

1) Developing Interview Questions:

We began investigating interview questions that felt like they would help students provide detailed responses from their personal experience. We tested the interview questions then refined them to be more clear.



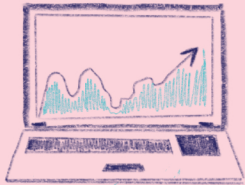
2) Collecting the Data:

Then we conducted interviews with our peers. We conducted 11 total interviews, transcribed them into text, then reviewed the data.



3) Analyzing the Data:

After reviewing the data, we began to better understand specific instances in school that made people feel dehumanized. We began looking for commonalities and themes amongst the young people's experiences.



The Findings: 4 Big Problem Areas

Our analyses of the data

1. Food:

School lunch is an issue brought up consistently amongst young people. The major issues with school lunch centered around its nutritional value, the variety of food, and safety with incidences of food being served past its expiration date.

"It's really gross". -Amna

"Kids not getting the proper nutrition, or kids not being able to eat at school [is a problem] because some kids don't have food at home so that's their only meal."

-Jada

2. Teachers:

There are not enough teachers in schools. There is a lack of certified teachers and a lack of teachers who genuinely love their job. Teachers also don't get paid as much as they should.

"I don't want to say teachers don't want me to succeed, but I don't think that they want the opposite. I think it's just more of an indifference". - Naja

"Um, I believe, I don't remember what grade I was in, but there was a long time when there were a lot of things we didn't have. We didn't have teachers for a certain time for like an entire semester. We didn't have a science teacher. Then when the teachers went above and beyond to give us actual education to teach us stuff, they got fired." -Demareia

"Older people like treating younger people badly."

-Jada

3. Environment

The environment within schools is often very negative and oppressive. Students are constantly feeling overwhelmed, asked to conform to unrealistic standards, and are overly disciplined.

"Inhumane schools feel like the lack of individuality and systemic oppression"
-Demareia

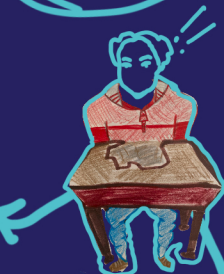
"I think an inhumane school looks like the authorities treating the students like they're less than or treating them like they're not people." -Emily

"Basically a school that treats their students like criminals. Not criminals, but like animals. They give them poor food, they treat them poorly, they don't respect the student, they don't look for what the student needs in a school or what they want in a school. They're just doing this for their own personal gain." -Sarah

4. Classes

Class isn't always conducive to learning. Class sizes are too big for the classrooms, forcing students to stand aside because there aren't enough seats. There aren't enough supplies to go around and the supplies that are available are outdated.

"It's a school where you're not allowed to be who you are and you are forced to be some type of 'picture-perfect'. You feel like you're in competition with your other classmates to see who's the smartest and to see who can raise their hand faster and who can give a correct answer and you're shamed if you give an incorrect answer." -Emily




"The school I currently go to is complicated in the sense that it's very nontraditional. So there aren't exactly classes that you go to, and like, let a teacher talk to you. Classes are mostly like activities to complete online and I don't like it because I don't feel like I'm learning anything." - Naja

The Solution: Student-Centered Schools

Our research uncovered many of the core aspects of school that are inhumane. The next question is what are we going to do about it?



These are large, systemic problems that won't be solved overnight. Nor will they be solved by adults only. This will take a community effort with youth involved, supporting the need for **student-centered schools.**





STUDENT CENTERED SCHOOLS: Schools that foster youth voice, ideas, and involvement in the design of the school system; Schools that serve the best interest of the student, and look for students' opinion in the creation of curriculum, building design, and more!

In the spring of 2019, 482 Youth put out a survey for youth in Detroit to ask what they wanted to change in their school. Over 1,000 students responded!

Although we received many answers, the number one answer was students want more of a voice in decisions at their schools including in curriculum and the budget. We think that's important because students having a say in their schools could fix many problems that we face.

This finding led us on a journey to figure out how students can have a say in their schools from the school board to the budget and beyond. The youth collective planning committee met to brainstorm and define the idea of student-centered schools. Students, who are the closest to the problems in our schools can develop the most impactful solutions. Moreover, students having a voice in their schools will benefit the overall school system by solving big issues like the ones we found in our research.



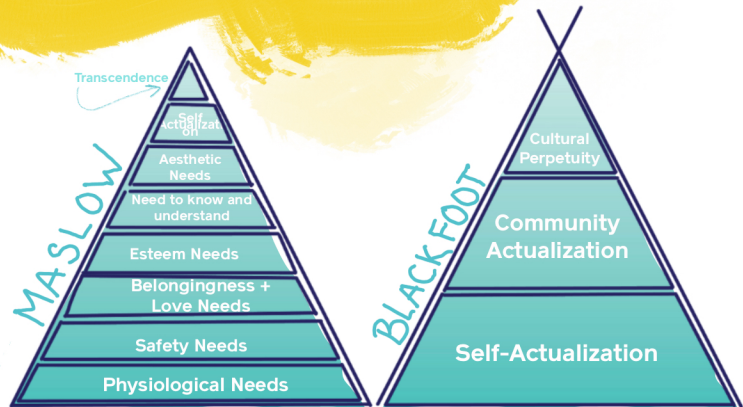
Which brings us back to the idea of '**Self Actualization**' and the Hierarchy of Needs that inspired our research.

Blackfoot Nation Belief/ Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

• These frameworks propose that when a person has all their needs met, they exist within "Self Actualization." From here, they are the best they can be, they are curious and they are making the world they want to see!

• Moreover, the Blackfoot understand self-actualization as the base for building a strong community.

• Unfortunately, as we've seen in our research, we have a lot of needs that aren't being met. Schools often have students who are living within the lower ranks of the hierarchy, where they are not feeling secure within their environment.



Adapted from Barbara Bray (Huitt, 2004, Blackstock, 2008, Wadsworth)

Student-centered schools could be a great way to meet students' needs AND foster healthy communities in and around their schools.

If we center all decisions at a school around students' needs what could change?

**Join us and
482Forward to fight
for student-
centered schools!**

Check out the website at
482Forward.org to learn
more about 482Forward's
work.





&

People in
Education



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