



Deeper Learning for Prevention & Potential

Why Justice-Involved Youth Are Reimagining School

October 2022

Countless Twin Cities youth have been traumatized by [rising](#) violence in recent years. Many have died. Over 10,000 local youth are arrested annually. The juvenile justice system is [struggling](#) to cope. Leaders have worked to reduce incarceration and violence through restorative practices, social services and school attendance for youth already in the system. *These important efforts do everything except change school.* We know youth at risk [thrive](#) in [relationship](#)-rich settings that [cultivate](#) belonging, independence, mastery and purpose to tap into potential. Yet youth facing [adversity](#) rarely experience these life-changing imperatives *in school* during their most pivotal years.

Led by youth with justice system experience, an emerging coalition of stakeholders aims to **ensure that Twin Cities youth at risk of system involvement can access lifesaving [student-centered](#) schools as a violence and prison [prevention/recovery](#) strategy.** We believe that problems facing youth are best solved *with* youth. In recent months, youth participants shared their stories with diverse stakeholders, learned about school design and identified this goal: *create new middle “[microschools](#)” intentionally designed to cultivate potential and provide culturally affirming personalized learning, mentorship, mental health, social work and other holistic supports.*

Deeper Learning for Prevention & Potential (DLP) is led by [Bridgemakers](#), a Twin Cities nonprofit created and [led](#) by youth with justice system experience. Commissioned by the Center for Policy Design, the DLP project works in partnership with Wilder Research, Youth Lens 360, the Legal Rights Center, Youthrise and the High School for Recording Arts. Additional funding is provided by the McKnight Foundation and F.R. Bigelow Foundation, the Aspen Institute Youth-Led Change Fund and the City of Minneapolis Violence Prevention Fund.

Project Milestones to Date:

- March: Bridgemakers’ youth-led proposal selected by the Center for Policy Design in competitive RFP process
- April-May: Youth-led recruitment of design team of 15 youth, most with justice system experience
- June: Youth-led youth team onboarding/storytelling retreat; 1st youth-led Summit elevating youth stories (*see [notes](#)*)
- August: 2nd Youth-led Summit elevating stories and solutions from youth and innovative educators/schools (*notes*)
- June and August: Youth-led Presentations to/discussions with Hennepin County Youth Justice Council
- May-August: Youth-led conversations with 20+ local, state and nonprofit justice system and education stakeholders
- September: Youth-led discussion with Hennepin County Chief Juvenile Judge and Probation Division Manager
- October 4: Youth-led discussion with Ramsey County Transforming Systems Together Director
- October 6: Youth-led presentation and stakeholder co-planning session hosted by Coalition for Youth Justice

Project Deliverables Ahead:

- Youth-led study visit(s) to one or more models of deeper, student-centered learning
- Youth-led recruitment and solidification of next stage DLP partners
- Completion of DLP mini-documentary
- Completion of DLP report with findings and recommendations
- Nov. 15 or 16: Youth-led Town Meeting co-presenting/discussing mini-doc, report and next steps with public

Our Ask: Twin Cities youth at risk need juvenile justice leaders to *embrace and help create* compelling new student-centered microschools, and *make widespread student-centered school improvement central to prevention and recovery.* Your vocal support and funding for these two priorities will help many more youth thrive.

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7 Student-Centered Learning Principles

from: www.educationevolving.org/learning

Positive Relationships: With caring adults who know/believe in/hold us to high expectations

Real-World Relevant: We solve real-world problems & learn skills we'll use later in our own lives

Ownership & Agency: We have freedom to pursue passions & interests in learning, with teachers as guides and facilitators

Whole Child Needs: Our physical, psychological & safety needs are met

Positive Identity: We're embraced for who we are/develop sense of our own identity/belonging

Anytime/Anywhere: We also learn in the community, internships, weekends, extracurriculars

Competency-Based: We advance by mastering learning objectives & receive support as needed

