



## YPAR IN ACTION EXAMPLES OF YOUTH-LED PROJECTS IN OREGON

**Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)** is one way youth-serving organizations (such as schools, local public health departments, community-based organizations) can engage youth in policies and programs that impact their lives.

Below are three examples of how Oregon students have used YPAR to take action in their communities!

### ***Bend High School Design Justice Class, Deschutes County***

The Design Justice Class at Bend High School is a project-based design class where students are empowered to research solutions to issues around equity and justice. Students learn about and apply research methods to better understand the experiences and priorities of their peers, and advocate for positive change in their school, community, and beyond.

In 2018, Design Justice students started a project to evaluate how their current school dress code was impacting students. Data that they collected through a school-wide survey revealed several inequities in

the enforcement of the dress code impacting already marginalized groups. Students presented their findings to their school board, along with a model dress code.

While the suggested dress code was not initially implemented by the school board, in June 2021, the Bend-La Pine School District approved a revised district-wide dress code based on the model dress code developed by Design Justice students. The new policy was printed in the schools' handbooks and implemented in fall 2021.

Each year, students identify new projects to work on in small groups. They may also decide to continue working on a project from previous years. Other efforts that Design Justice students have led or are continuing to lead include:

- Reassessing the role of School Resource Officers (SROs) in their school
- Advocating for access to free menstrual products in their school and statewide
- Developing a Land Acknowledgement and building awareness of the importance of Land Acknowledgements in their school and community

## **David Douglas High School YACHT, Multnomah County**

The David Douglas Youth Action Council Health Team (YACHT) is a student led club that does hands-on health activities and events, promotes student health rights and empowerment, and advises the student health center at David Douglas High School (DDHS).

During the 2020-21 school year, the YACHT wanted to learn more about students' experiences and needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning. YACHT members attended YPAR trainings alongside their adult facilitators to learn about research methods and applied what they learned during virtual afterschool club sessions to answer their research question: "How do DDHS students feel in online school compared to in-person school?".

Together, YACHT members developed a survey tool and administered the survey to students at their school. After analyzing the data, YACHT members created an infographic summarizing their key findings and themes and shared it with their school administrators to raise awareness about the experiences and concerns of their classmates.

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*"I liked meeting and collaborating with everyone on the survey. I also liked learning about other students' experiences with online school through the survey." – DDHS YACHT member*

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## **Milwaukie High Youth Advisory Council (YAC), Clackamas County**

The Milwaukie High YAC empowers youth to take control of their health. Through education, community involvement, and outreach efforts, the YAC offers youth information to make healthy decisions throughout life. YAC members meet weekly with an adult facilitator to work on projects to engage their community at the local, state, and national levels.

Starting in 2018, YAC members decided to explore whether their school's health curriculum was meeting the needs of all students, and especially LGBTQ+

students, at Milwaukie High. YAC members created a survey and partnered with school administrators and health teachers to implement the survey during health classes. Students were asked to respond to questions about topics covered during health class, topics that were missing, and the extent to which class materials were inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities.

YAC members used the findings from their survey to start conversations about the need for LGBTQ+ inclusive health curriculum. Students shared their findings with health teachers at their school and presented to the North Clackamas School Board, leading to change at both the school and district levels. At their school, the YAC partnered with health teachers to provide student-taught health classes with an inclusive lens and LGBTQ+ inclusive language, while the School Board adopted new additions to the district's Comprehensive Sexuality Education Plan based on YAC members' recommendations.

YAC members continue to promote student health and wellness through health class presentations and, in 2020-21, expanded their efforts with a Healthy Relationships Summit for North Clackamas students.

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*"I think YAC members, new and old, learned that they are powerful and can create the change they want to see." – Milwaukie High YAC adult facilitator*

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## **Ready to get a YPAR project started in your community?**

Find resources and learn more at [Oregon YPAR](#).