

Youth During Non-School Hours Study Proposal 08.05

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

What youth do in the non-school hours is critical to their learning and development - as well as their sense of citizenship. European countries often use this time to build stronger, more engaged citizens. I would like to see the Citizens League stimulate wide ranging conversations about what is known about community learning opportunities in the non-school hours and how we as citizens, community leaders, and elected officials can make sure that Minnesota's opportunity gap is recognized and seriously addressed through new forms of public - private - and personal partnerships.

2. Why is this problem important?

Youth have the equivalent of a full time job each year when they are not in school and too often not constructively engaged. This time is a valuable opportunity to build youth who can learn, lead and contribute yet we do little to systematically support families or communities to make the most of this time. Recent statewide random sample of parents and youth provide new data on these issues and will be released this spring at a non-partisan Governor's Summit on Afterschool Opportunities. Getting the research and the recommendations considered by a wider population is essential.

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

Making this a topic for a study group or conversation series, in cooperation with others, could broaden who understands and can help champion more effective actions.

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

There has already been one report by a commission which is entitled Journeys into Community: Transforming Youth Opportunities for Learning and Development sponsored by the U of M, Mcknight Foundation, and the MN Department of Education. The Governor's Summit May 1 is a follow up and extension of this work for business leaders, mayors, tribal leaders, public safety officials, and others to go deeper into what is known and what can be done. Research briefs and studies are underway on the impact, cost, quality, and availability of these opportunities. In short, the time is ripe and momentum is building.

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

See above notes on briefs being prepared. This is an area that has received great national attention recently and where new work is showing the importance and power of these types of opportunities - including impacts on learning and new international perspectives. The University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development - which I direct as Associate Dean for Youth Development -- is focused on this work in several ways and could be a resource to this effort.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

Great efforts have been made to keep this issue from the partisan wars that face so many issues in MN today. As a U we are bound to staying non-partisan and evidence based.

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

Members are often parents who want the best for their own children but may underestimate the importance of these types of opportunities and what the community can do through new forms of public-private and personal partnerships. Other members are concerned about what young people do in destructive ways in these hours and may find constructive approaches that encourage contributions by youth to fit their own philosophy of public debate and giving.

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

Income and race are two of the biggest factors creating the opportunity gap during these hours and this contributes to the educational disparities we see in MN. Research shows that underserved communities are significantly more likely to want these types of opportunities, see communities as not doing enough, and as supporting efforts that assure access. This is a major issue for underserved youth and communities yet the approach taken is asset oriented and not deficit oriented which is consistent with many community building philosophies these days.

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

Public understanding is the target - especially parents and the youth themselves as well as community leaders. Changing the public will is essential if we are to forge a new type of public-private-personal responsibility partnership.

10. What resources—funding, experts, etc. might be available to support this project?

The University is investing in this area through the Extension Center for Youth Development which I direct and which runs the 4-h program statewide along with the Youth Work Institute for non-credit training of youth workers. We have several public and private partners already funding multiple efforts in this area and a partnership with the Citizens League is a natural expansion of such work.