

Youth Participatory Action Research Projects

Youth Participatory Action Research is a form of research that centres community relationships and local impact. Participatory action research is a way for a community to come together to learn and then act to make change. In schools, it often looks like a collective of teachers and students coming together to search for answers to pressing issues through investigations using both primary and secondary sources. YPAR is most impactful when students and teachers see each other as collaborators who can look at an issue with equally valid but different lenses.

Youth participatory action research often results in high-quality research – it is not just a fun project for children, but an important way for us as adults and education leaders to gather information about schools and education in partnership with our most important stakeholders: children. The number one reason I practice YPAR is to model and to explore what rigorous, data-driven, highly contextual decision-making can look like when the process commits to student partnership. Youth participatory action research allows us to pursue research methodologies that are rooted in context, nuanced, and responsive, allowing us to hopefully get the best possible information as we seek to understand what is and isn't working in schools for kids.

Involving young people in research builds agency and citizenship, literacy skills, data and numeracy skills, and voice. I think that it melds the best practices from a lot of different schools of thought in terms of what constitutes high-quality education. It is hands-on and relevant, academic and rigorous, and collaborative.

YPAR helps kids think. Authors and researchers have explored YPAR's impact on young people's academics and civic engagement (*Trauma-Responsive Schooling* and *Revolutionizing Education* are two great books to learn more). In my own experience as a researcher and facilitator of YPAR, participants speak about a deeper understanding of power, dynamics, of positionality and identity, of collaboration and interpersonal relationships, and of research as a tool in service of thoughtful and sustained change.

I have been practicing YPAR since 2020. My intergenerational research teams have presented at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard's Chan School of Public Health, Teach for India, and Avasara Academy about student-teacher relationships and emancipatory methodologies in research.