

The Garage Community & Youth Center

Theory of Change

The Garage's Core Belief & Impact Statement:

The Garage believes that all youth are valuable and are created with purpose, but unfortunately, we live in a society rife with inequality that suppresses the equality and value of youth as members of the community. Youth face incredible barriers that limit their potential and value that include, but are not limited to: racism; immigration status; gender; sexual orientation; inequitable education; unaffordable post-secondary education options; prejudiced judicial systems; low socioeconomic status; minimal access to affordable housing; limited public transportation; language barriers. These factors often have negative consequences on the mental, emotional, and physical health of youth. It is our understanding, through our work and experience in the field of youth development, that all youth face potential threats and obstacles that hinder them from finding value and purpose, in turn, incapacitating full access as a member of their community. While addressing the inequities of systems that directly affect local youth, The Garage's work is informed by an asset model that recognizes that our youth are not broken; instead it is the systems surrounding them which are fractured.

We believe that all youth have the capacity for great distinction and potential and, through guidance and support, should be equipped to define their own success and create thriving lives within their communities. Therefore, The Garage desires that all middle and high school youth, in Kennett Square and Avon Grove, feel empowered to pursue and reclaim their value and purpose in the world. Empowered youth make wise decisions, have hope for their future, and will be prepared to be successful, balanced, healthy, and active members of their community.

Nature of the Problem:

Adolescence is a unique period of growth and development for all youth. By way of simply being a teenager, youth are subject to this natural change in functioning and evolution. This critical stage for human development includes increased independence from caregivers, and provides an ideal time for influential interventions to help shape psychological and behavioral aspects of youth and their future lives. Without positive guidance, youth are subject to developing unhealthy habits, engaging in risky behaviors, and negative social and behavioral outcomes.

While the typical school day provides structure, investment, guidance, and educational development, over 11 million children leave school for an unsupervised environment after school and throughout school breaks. Time spent unstructured and unsupervised with peers increases the likelihood for youth to participate in risky, boundary-pushing, and delinquent activities (NCBI, 2018). In Pennsylvania, the “prime time for juvenile crime” is between the hours of 2PM and 6PM (After School Alliance, 2019). The After School Alliance reports that for every one participant in a quality after school program, there are two more who would participate but cannot due to a lack of programs available (2019).

Educational Inequities

In Pennsylvania, Black and Hispanic youth fare worse than white youth in all 17 of the indicators of educational opportunities (i.e. rigorous academics, access to counselors, and positive school climate), and White youth, on average, receive better educational opportunities than non-white youth (Research for Action, 2016). Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) research notes that , in the Kennett Consolidated School District (KCS D), the Black-White reading achievement gap is 20% while the Hispanic-White Reading gap is 37%. In the Avon Grove School District, the Black-White reading achievement gap is 24% while the Hispanic-White Reading gap is 34%. The Black-White math achievement gap in KCS D is 31% while the Hispanic-White achievement gap is 46%, and the Black-White math achievement gap in AGSD is 25% while the Hispanic-White achievement gap is 38% (Public Citizens for Children and Youth p. 28-29). AP enrollment for White youth is 11%, while AP enrollment for Black and Hispanic youth is 1% (Public Citizens for Children and Youth p.26)

Discrimination breeds an unhealthy balance of increased punishments for developmentally appropriate behaviors, and further perpetuates the school to prison pipeline. Specifically in Pennsylvania, there exists a disparate variance in school districts with high levels of youth of color. These districts often carry the heaviest local tax burden yet receive considerably less state funding compared to districts with white student demographics (Education Law Center Report, 2017). According to research recently published by the PCCY, Black youth were 5.3 times as likely in Chester County to receive out-of-school suspensions and while Black youth make up 6% of enrollment in Chester County schools, they account for 15% of school disciplinary referrals to the police (Public Citizens for Children and Youth, 2021, p. 10-11).

Residency Status

Immigration status and residency status, as well as changing Federal Immigration Policies, create an extreme problem for youth. Planning for the future is difficult for many families without the security to remain in the United States long-term. Youth without residency status, or youth that live within a household of mixed residency status, are often at risk for predatory practices. Landlords may provide unsafe and overcrowded housing. Employers may pay below-poverty, cash wages, and/or perpetuate unsafe working conditions. Shame and fear of discovery often prevent families from seeking social and medical services.

Families of Emerging Bilingual youth also face barriers to accessing financial resources, healthcare options, public information and communication, employment opportunities, etc.

due to a lack of information disseminated in their language of origin. This disparity leads to misinformation, mistrust, and an unawareness of the existing resources that they could access.

Socio-economic factors

Generational poverty is a long-term impact that requires years of direct investment, relationship building, advocacy, guidance, and the collaborative efforts of multiple systems that affect our families. According to research from MIT, escaping poverty required almost 20 years with no major financial obstacles. Economist Peter Temin notes that education is the key to escaping generational poverty, but this means plotting, starting in early childhood, a successful path to, and through, college. That's a 18-year (or longer) plan that can be easily upended (White, 2017).

Specific Need:

It is within the interaction of negative social and behavioral influences, educational inequities, discriminatory residency status, and socio-economic issues in which The Garage's work exists. Garage youth are, more often than not, youth of color, immigrants, English language learners, youth experiencing learning differences, and living in poverty. However, The Garage is also aware that many barriers exist that transcend race, gender, and socio-economic status, and affect all youth. The Garage's programming is both broad and specific in order to sufficiently empower all youth in our community, regardless of background.

After School:

The Garage's primary role is to fill the void from when school dismisses to when parents return home from work. Garage programming fills those vulnerable hours with valuable opportunities for adults to invest in our youth by building relationships while also serving as committed and consistent mentors and authority figures. Instead of hours for youth to get into risky or delinquent behavior, youth utilize The Garage to be empowered and achieve their potential.

Academic Learning:

Due to the wide variety of factors that impact our youth, poor academic performance frequently limits opportunities for gainful employment and post-secondary education access, leaving many of our youth discouraged from full academic participation. The Garage's daily, academic support time serves to empower youth to achieve, which will open them up to further opportunities. Emphasis on academic performance is geared towards giving youth the tools they need to finish high school and be in a position where they can pursue post-secondary education or training, or gainful employment, thus empowering them to have hopeful futures and confidence in their endeavors.

Vocational:

Garage youth often have difficulty gaining access to high-paying careers. Language barriers,

generational poverty, citizenship, and learning difficulties often lead to youth working in mushroom farms or working for unlivable wages. The Garage's post-secondary preparedness programming focuses upon building skills and knowledge to be successful after our youth leave The Garage. MAPS (Motivating Achieving Powerful youth) equips youth with practical life skills that might never be addressed anywhere else, such as building a professional resume, dress and etiquette, interview practice, and financial literacy. The Garage's Graduate Coordinator also works one-on-one with high school juniors and seniors to navigate the difficult college application, and financial aid process, that is overwhelming to most parents, especially those that have never been through the process themselves.

Social-Emotional:

Where The Garage's academic and post-secondary support programming focuses on how to achieve potential, the rest of The Garage programming focuses on why it is important to achieve potential. Programs like Girls and Boys Program focus on teaching youth why they are valuable and created with purpose, as well as teach social development such as confidence and self-discovery. STEAM and IHOP activities are designed around discovery of new opportunities, different perspectives, and cooperation. Self-Care workshops place mental health and self-awareness as a priority, as often youth are discouraged from talking about their emotional wellbeing.

Community Service:

Being part of a community means giving of yourself. That is why The Garage places emphasis on community service in the form of monthly community service projects with local community partners, as well as an annual day of service every spring. Through service youth can explore career options, learn about additional community resources, as well as create a habit of giving back to their local community.

Advocacy:

The Garage serves as a liaison between the community and our families. Many Garage parents and caregivers are Emerging Bilinguals, which can limit their access to English-only resources, information, and opportunities. The Garage serves as a central hub of opportunity, either providing families directly with what they need or making connections with other community partners to provide for our families. Throughout the process of developing a Theory of Change, The Garage realized that a formal definition of our Advocacy work was missing from the larger organizational outcomes. This definition is currently a work in progress and a direct result of the Evaluation Capacity Building Initiative supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Garage Strategy / Core Components:

The mission of The Garage is to empower youth to pursue their potential academically, relationally, and spiritually. Our desired impact is to help youth make wise decisions about themselves, their core convictions, their relationships, their educational pursuits, and interactions with their communities. The Garage equips youth to begin a cycle of hopefulness by acknowledging and taking steps to overcome life's challenges through

engaging youth in Garage programs which build knowledge of self, others, resources, and opportunities. The Garage exists to provide academic, vocational, and social-emotional guidance, a safe and welcoming community, and advocacy on behalf of our youth and their families.

The strategies employed by The Garage include Academic, Learning, Vocational, Social-Emotional, and Advocacy programs. All programs provided at The Garage are developed to address the following objectives:

- 1) Create an environment where teens feel safe and empowered
- 2) Promote social and professional development
- 3) Encourage youth to stay in school and to continue their studies after graduation
- 4) Promote positive self-esteem, civility, leadership, respect, and responsibility

Core Component: Academic		
Strategies	Activities	Outputs
Provide structured and resourced space and time for youth to complete necessary academic work	Homework Time (one hour daily for focused homework time. youth are able to work independently, in small peer groups, or with adult support)	# of youth participating in homework hour # of youth who have positive GPAs throughout and at the end of the school year # of youth who report they feel motivated # of youth who report they are doing well in school # of youth who report they routinely do their homework
Provide the adult resources to guide youth in their academic school work	Tutoring (one-on-one academic support) <u>STEAM</u> - weekly hands-on activities catered towards exploration of sciences, cooperation, and problem solving.	# of tutors and tutoring hours provided to youth (in person and virtual) # of youth with tutors who have improved grades in school

Core Component: Vocational		
Strategies	Activities	Outputs

<p>Provide youth with the opportunities to learn about a variety of future educational and occupational pathways</p>	<p><u>MAPS:</u> Presentations by employers and other adult community members on professions</p> <p>One-on-one individual attention based upon youth post-grad goals Interest/passion exploration workshop</p> <p><u>IHOP</u> - monthly presentations from outside professionals in diverse occupational fields that foster awareness of career opportunities as well as build relationships between youth and the community.</p> <p>Professional competency workshops (resumes, email writing, etc.)</p>	<p># College visits # of Training Program visits # youth attending college visits # youth attending MAPS workshops # hours spent one-on-one with the Graduate Coordinator # of IHOP presentations and variety of career pathways represented # of youth who report that they know what I need to do to go to college # of youth who report they have an idea of what they want to do after high school # of youth who report they can find the resources to go to college # of youth who report they have a career goal # of youth who report they know where to go to get information about post-secondary options</p>
<p>Provide youth with access to professional employment opportunities</p>	<p>Career Compass - Paid Professional Summer Internship Program Monthly volunteer opportunities</p>	<p># Career Compass host sites who respond positively to having an intern # youth who obtain a career related job after completing career compass # of hours of community service by high school youth</p>

Core Component: Community		
Strategies	Activities	Outputs
<p>Connect youth with adults who are invested in their development and building a healthy, safe, and strong relationship</p>	<p><u>Mentoring</u> - 1-1 targeted pairings of youth to adults. Mentor pairs are placed together for at least one year and are typically centered on a goal between the mentor and mentee.</p> <p><u>IHOP</u> - monthly presentations from outside professionals in diverse occupational fields that foster awareness of career opportunities as well as build relationships between youth and the community.</p>	<p># volunteers # volunteer hours # mentor meetings # youth and mentos reporting a close relationship #IHOP presenters # of youth who report positive adult support # of youth who report they like they belong at The Garage # of youth who report their ideas count at The Garage # of youth who report that people really listen to them at The Garage # of youth who report they feel like they are successful at The Garage</p>

		# of youth who report The Garage is a comfortable place to hang out # of youth who report The Garage is safer than school # of youth who report they feel like they are someone important at The Garage
Coordinate age appropriate volunteer service opportunities that encourage social responsibility (Community development, Connecting with community members, provide a sense of purpose, increase social awareness, encourage citizenship)	<u>Community service</u> - Monthly opportunities to serve other non-profits in our community	# hours community service provided by youth # of youth who report they are aware of needs in the community # of youth who report they are interested in volunteering in the community

Core Component: Social-Emotional Learning		
Strategies	Activities	Outputs
Provide youth with the opportunity to explore their faith and spiritual beliefs to better understand their value and the place they hold in the world	<u>Roots</u> - weekly optional bible study run by volunteers	# faith study programs # report feelings of value and purpose # of youth who report comfort exploring their faith options
Provide workshops which teach self-care, self-awareness, and strategies for good mental and physical health	<u>Self Care</u> - twice-monthly workshop lead by a professional to all youth	# of self-care workshops Affirmative responses to “I have adults I can ask for help” # of Mental Health workshops # of youth attending Self Care and Mental Health workshops
Provide workshops which encourage self-discovery (Creativity, trying new things, life skills, critical thinking skills, new friendships, build self esteem and confidence)	<u>Girls' & Boys program</u> - Twice monthly workshops offered to all youth	# attending Girls and Boys Program # of youth who report having knowledge of their interests and passions # of youth who report feeling positive peer connection and support # of youth who report feeling confident # of youth who report an interest in trying new things

Core Component: Advocacy

Strategies	Activities	Outputs
Educate the existing network of The Garage's dominant culture volunteers, funders, and community members about the systemic inequities that affect our youth and families.	Provide informational/educational opportunities to our volunteers, funders, networks, etc to learn about the social issues facing our youth and their families.	# annual workshops provided # of people attending workshops # of volunteer trainings provided
Share needs and potential policy and system changes that would benefit our youth.	Meetings with community leaders for the purpose of advocating for systematic changes for a more inclusive community Connecting and training youth and parents on how to address systematic changes	# of meetings attended and convened # of workshops for youth # of youth who attend workshops/trainings
Participate in systems change groups and organizational efforts. Support and amplify the efforts of policy changes that benefit our youth and families.	Active membership in Latinx-led community, regional, and statewide organizations.	# of staff training/resource opportunities

Outcomes

Collectively, our youth and advocacy services work together to address the racial and social inequities and disparities experienced by youth and families in Kennett Square and Avon Grove. Across all of our work, we are in the pursuit of more equitable communities where middle and high school youth are empowered to make wise decisions, have hope for their future, and are prepared to be successful, balanced, healthy, and active members of their community.

	Academic	Vocational	Community	Social-Emotional	Advocacy
Short-Term Outcomes					
Youth can identify vocational goals	X	X			
Youth understand the benefit of doing well in school	X	X		X	
Youth have knowledge of self				X	
Youth recognize that they are a valuable and necessary piece of			X	X	X

our broader community					
Broad dominant culture local community is more aware of our youth/families and the systematic inequities that affect them			X		X
Medium-Term Outcomes					
Youth understand the steps they need to take to achieve their post-secondary goals	X	X			
Youth apply strategies that enhance their learning	X	X			
Youth understand who they are in the world	X	X		X	
Community leaders know and understand the systematic issues that are adversely affecting our youth and families					X
Youth contribute to the broader community as a responsible member and leader			X		X
Long-Term Outcomes					
Youth successfully implement their post secondary plans	X	X		X	X
Youth feel empowered to make an impact in the world	X	X	X	X	X
Systems and policy change to allow for more equitable inclusion of our youth and families in our community.					X

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