

# PADRES & JÓVENES UNIDOS

## **YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (YPAR) TEACHER'S TOOLKIT**

Created for Padres y Jóvenes Unidos (PJU)  
by the [Research Hub for Youth Organizing and Education Policy](#)  
a project of CU Engage and NEPC

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# WHY YOU SHOULD USE THIS TOOLKIT



## Padres & Jóvenes Unidos Principles of Unity

Padres & Jóvenes Unidos emerged from the struggles of the Chicano and Mexicano peoples in the Southwest including the United Farmworkers Union, immigrant rights and the Chicano movement. From this foundation, we work to build power and a movement to create a true democracy with economic equity and racial justice at its core.

The following are Principles of Unity for P&JU. They are the foundation to our work and should be shared with members, supporters and friends to explain who we are and what we do.

**We believe we live in a society with institutional and structural racism that is rooted in the oppression and exploitation of peoples of color in the U.S.** Racism is embedded in all the major institutions that touch our lives such as education, employment, housing, law enforcement, and health. The ideology of racism was developed to justify the exploitation and oppression of peoples of color.

**We believe that our society is divided by class, a fundamental feature of capitalism.** Class in the US has the wealth of the entire country held by 1% of people at the top (i.e., multi-billionaires). It is integral to all the major institutions that touch our lives such as the inequality of schools, income, housing, law enforcement, and health.

**We believe that the people who are the most directly impacted by an injustice must be in the lead to change it.** In the United States, people of color must be in the leadership of fighting for their freedom and rights. **White folks should stand in solidarity with people of color and their movements.**

**We believe that we must build organizations of the people – from which people can fight back, to defend and expand their rights** and organize masses of people to realize dignity and peace. Without organization - we are at the mercy of those who are organized.

**We believe in removing barriers to women's equality and leadership.** We must make our organization a safe and supportive place for women to lead on all fronts. In addition, we are committed to ending all forms of oppression for women in society by advancing institutional change and reform for women's rights.

**We believe in the human rights of LGBTQ people and stand in solidarity with their struggles for equity and justice.** In particular – LGBTQ women of color – must be developed as leaders. They continue to play a leading role in many emerging efforts to dismantle racial inequity and oppression throughout the nation.



# HOW YOU CAN USE THIS TOOLKIT



The relationship between teacher, schools, and students creates a power dynamic that places students as recipients of knowledge. This toolkit challenges that power dynamic and views youth as experts and teachers as guides; teachers and students can act and learn together, create critical research, take charge, and create change!

The activities in this toolkit can serve as templates for the change you wish to see in your schools and communities, but we hope that you and the participants will also explore other ideas, which you can access through various links in this toolkit and on the [Resources](#) section towards the end of this guidebook. Here, you will find guidance in activities using collaborative research, education, and action, and an idea of what those activities may look like. These activities will help you in developing the space, time, and activities for youth and adults to engage and feel empowered to create change, to build more socially just schools and communities.

You can use these activities to:

1. Work together with others to address barriers to quality education that exist for low income communities, communities of color, and individuals with disabilities;
2. Do research to understand or gather evidence about issues that affect you directly;
3. Learn, explore, and analyze power relations on issues of race and racism and how they relate to other -isms (gender, sexuality, age, class, ableism, nationality or immigration status, language, etc.);
4. Develop a critical or more nuanced understanding of social inequities and creating change;
5. Act towards creating change in your personal lives, school, and community.

## UNDERLYING BELIEFS

Some underlying beliefs behind the activities in this guidebook include:

- every individual and, or community holds knowledge that is legitimate;
- individuals and, or communities can and should be included in researching the issues and concerns in their communities/context;
- individual and, or community experiences and knowledge can and should inform solutions.

These beliefs draw on an approach called Participatory Action Research (PAR), sometimes also called [Youth Participatory Action Research \(YPAR\)](#) and [Critical Participatory Action Research \(CPAR\)](#). For this guidebook, we call it YPAR.

## YOUR ROLE

As a teacher guiding a Jóvenes Unidos Club, you will help youth to identify the problems they would like to address in their schools and communities, and play a key role in the co-construction of knowledge. You are guiding students into inquiry on issues that have meaning and relevance to their lives and future. You will be using Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) to look at society through a more critical lens and creating a critical community with youth, by identifying issues, complex civic problems, collecting and analyzing information on those issues, identifying solutions, sharing your solutions, and creating change.

# EXAMPLES FROM PJU

PJU parent and youth members have carried out research as part of campaigns to improve schools and communities.

## Example 1

High school students have also completed research. For example, as part of their End the School to Jail Track campaign, PJU parent and youth members conducted a survey that exposed inflated graduation rates, a “jail-like” culture at North High School, and sexist and oppressive behavior by some School Resource Officers. This report played a pivotal role in developing PJU strategies to disrupt the School-to-Prison pipeline. This report was titled *The Voice of Over 700 Students: North High School*.

## Example 2

Parents studied the problems with pre-K education in Southwest Denver. They published the findings from their research in a report called *The Great Unequalizer: How Denver’s Pre-K system fails the children of Southwest Denver and other low-income communities of color.*

To create the report, PJU Parent and youth members completed a research scan, conducted focus groups with parents, interviewed a variety of stakeholders, and conducted a survey of Southwest Denver residents that revealed that pre-K enrollment rates for children are low due to the substantial barriers impeding their access to high-quality pre-K programs.

For more information or to obtain copies of any PJU publications, please contact [info@padresunidos.org](mailto:info@padresunidos.org).



# KEY DEFINITIONS



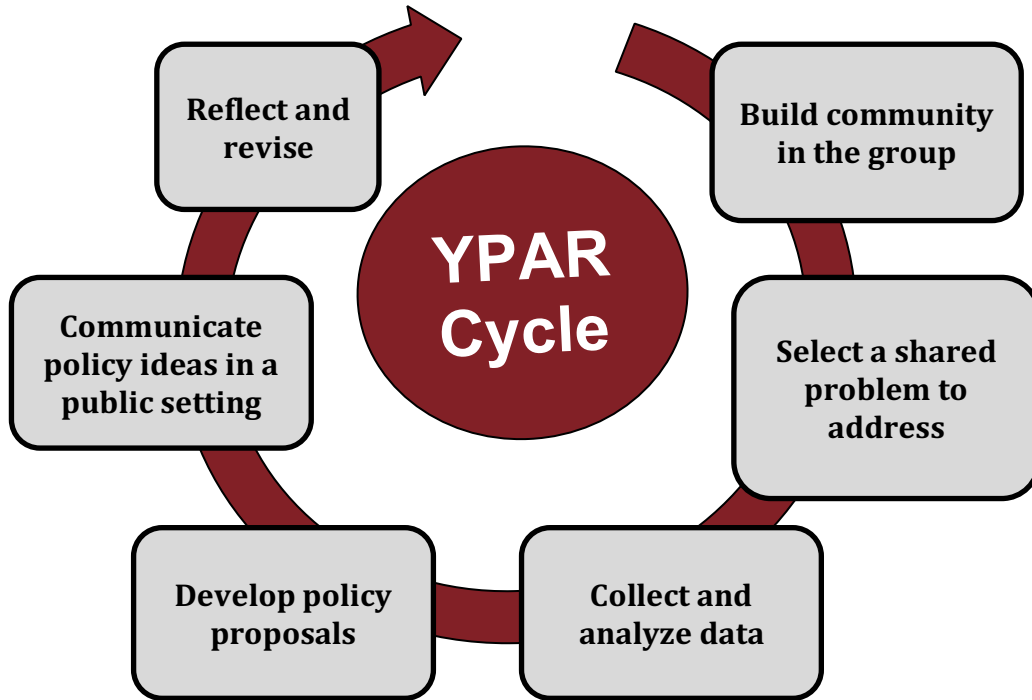
## YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (YPAR)

In YPAR, people directly affected by an issue work together to understand and study it. YPAR involves a cycle, which can take a few weeks, a few months, or a few years! The length just depends on your goals and the scale of the issue you are addressing.

In community organizing, we use YPAR because it gives teachers, youth, and community members a lens and method of doing critical work, building skills to identify inequality in our society, and make informed change. This cycle, depicted in the image below, includes a combination of community-building, identification of a problem, research, development of a policy solution, a call to action, and ongoing reflection.

*Building community* is an important first step in the YPAR cycle because communities—groups of people who share common interests, social, or geographic space--can be affected and can affect the actions and objectives of this work. Being part of a community that is trying to make change can be a source of empowerment and strength building, and can provide a sense of purpose and belonging for participants.





It is important to know who makes up the members of your community, but also to find some *common understanding of the issue(s) that you are interested in addressing*. *Collecting data* means that you are gathering that information, which you deem necessary for understanding or learning more about your issue(s) of interest. Data collection goes beyond an internet searches and involves building connections by talking to people, conducting surveys, and interviews. Next, you will want to *analyze* your information, or examine the data in ways that reveal the relationships, patterns, trends, or inherent key aspects. This is an opportunity for youth to write their own stories! *Developing policy arguments and communicating your policy ideas* is your opportunity to hold people accountable for rules, practices, and procedures that are directly associated with your issue(s) of interest. Here is when you can advocate for a new policy, suggest change in existing practices and procedures, or hold people or systems responsible for their actions. Lastly, it is important to reflect and revise your work and its effect(s). Ideally, you will be able to reflect on your work throughout the YPAR cycle, so that you can accomplish the change or outcomes you wish to create.

# THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE GETTING STARTED



Depending on the context (neighborhood vs. school) you will find that each setting may present unique challenges.

## *Within neighborhoods or communities*

The activities in this handbook can be adapted to the community setting. We want a representative democracy by building the space for an active and engaged community. That said, not all youth and adults will have the same availability, time, or access to participate. In some cases, there may be time constraints, transportation issues, or language barriers. Try to be aware of these as you select where you will meet with your participants. Some ideas for accessible, public space include: your local public library, a coffee shop, a non-profit office space, or a park.

## *Within the school*

All students can benefit from being able to think critically, analyze information, express their point of view, and listen to the opinion of others. The activities that you will be exploring with students

will help students understand complex issues and negotiate controversy; they will learn to search for root causes of social inequities and enact solutions. That said, students and schools are subject to calendar constraints (typically 9 months out of the year) and time constraints (most students do have to go home at some point). There may also be a wide age range in your participants. Try to be aware of these as you select the problems, issues, and activities that you and your participants will undertake.

## THIS TOOLKIT



The examples on page four are from projects that took more than a year to complete. The activities in this toolkit are meant to provide a sequence of each activity that can be completed in time ranging from one day to several weeks. These projects may lead to long-term campaigns, but not necessarily.



Activities in this toolkit include lessons about engaging with families and community leaders, team-building lessons, lessons to empower, the basics of research, understanding oppression, and lessons that can help you decide on the issues/activities you want to undertake. These lessons and more can be accessed through the [YPAR Hub](#) at UC Berkeley.

## PLANNING A MEETING OR WORKSHOP AGENDA

Below are some elements that should be considered when planning a meeting or workshop. This structure is followed throughout the lessons and activities in this handbook. With some minor modifications, this can also serve as a template for more complex PAR projects. As you become more familiar with the structure and unique interests/needs of your group, you can use this structure to design other lesson/activity plans and projects of your own.

**TITLE:** Give your project a title that fits the activity.

**OBJECTIVES:** What is the issue/problem/topic/lesson that you will be addressing through this activity? What are the goals?

**NECESSARY MATERIALS:** Making your meeting accessible is an important aspect of ensuring that you have all necessary materials. Every community is different, but you should ensure that your meeting time and location are accessible and safe. Also, it will be helpful to list all possible materials (money, information/data, equipment, tools). It may also help to including amounts of materials, for how long these materials will be needed, and the specific purpose of each material.

**PREPARE:** Are there additional preparations that need to happen before the activity? For example, every meeting should have an agenda with time allotted to each part of the activity. Sharing the agenda in advance will give your student participants time to think and prepare. List any of these here.

**WARM UP/ICEBREAKER:** What activity can you use to get people participating, feeling comfortable with each other, shifting gears from whatever they were doing before? You can access some [icebreaker ideas here](#).

**MAIN ACTIVITY:** Carry out the activity/lesson/workshop for this meeting.

**REFLECT:** Reflect on the completed meeting/activity/workshop. If you had to do it over, would you do it the same? Is there something you would change?



**SUMMARIZE/DISCUSSION:** After the lesson is done, invite participants to discuss. You should keep notes of this discussion.

**CONCLUSION** (this is optional and more for a PAR project): After the project is done and you've had a discussion with participants, take some time to reflect on this project. Consider your role, the original goals and final accomplishments, the role of participants, and any issues that arose, or concerns that remain after the project.

## ACTIVITIES IN THE YPAR CYCLE



What follows are a series of suggested activities that follow the YPAR cycle and that should help in your work with student participants—build community, select a problem, collect and analyze data, develop policy arguments and share with public audiences.

# BUILD COMMUNITY<sup>1</sup>

**TEAM-BUILDING** Lessons that will give participants the chance to get to know how best to work together and understand one another.

[Verbal Communication](#)

[Non-verbal Communication](#)

[Trust-Building](#)

[Understanding Roles in Teams](#)

[Decision Making Processes](#)

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT** Lessons about engaging with families, community leaders, and more.

[Seeking Allies](#)

[Speaking to Powerful People](#)

[Engaging Your School Principal](#)

**YOUTH + ADULTS** Lessons to empower participants to understand their own value. Suggestions on how to foster positive youth-adult partnerships.

[Youth-Adult Power Sharing](#)

# SELECT A PROBLEM

**UNDERSTANDING OPPRESSION** Lessons that can help participants understand oppression, its origins, how it works, and how it is experienced.

[Busting Stereotypes](#)

[Government, Rights, and Power](#)

**CHOOSING THE ISSUE** Lessons that can help you decide on your question/problem/issue to work on.

[Defining the Research Question](#)

[Your Personal Connection with the Issue](#)

**COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND PROBLEMS**

[Imagining our Dream Community](#)

[Comparing Your Neighborhood to an Ideal](#)

[Identifying Community Issues and Assets](#)

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<sup>1</sup> All of these lessons and activities were accessed from the [YPAR Hub](#).

# COLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA

**RESEARCH BASICS** Lessons and resources about YPAR and how your group can get involved.

[Setting Ground Rules](#)

[Introduction to Research](#)

[Introduction to Participatory Action Research](#)

[Using Research for Change](#)

[Research Methods Round Robin](#)

# DEVELOP POLICY ARGUMENTS AND SHARE WITH PUBLIC AUDIENCES





**FROM RESEARCH TO COMMUNITY IMPACT** This section will help you with dissemination of your research.

[Applying Your Research Findings](#)

[Public Speaking Practice](#)

[Public Speaking: Using Hooks](#)

[Presentation Skills](#)

[Sharing Your Story with the Media](#)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### [A Short Guide to Community Base Participatory Action Research](#)

This is a community research lab guide written by the Advancement Project and Healthy City.

### [The Center for Education in Law and Democracy](#)

The Center for Education in Law and Democracy is a Colorado non-profit non-partisan educational organization that promotes and supports the development of responsible citizens committed to democratic principles and active participation in representative government.

They accomplish this by:

- Enhancing civic literacy and competence of students by providing opportunities for them to study, practice, and engage in active democratic citizenship;
- Providing professional development for teachers who work directly with young people as they learn to be successful, active citizens;
- Creating timely resources for instruction and assessment of learning;
- Collaborating with other organizations to promote civic and law-related education; and
- Cultivating partnerships between educators and lawyers, judges, law enforcement officers, legislators and other public officials.

### [Generation Citizen](#)

Generation Citizen works to ensure that every student in the United States receives an effective action civics education, which provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in our democracy as active citizens.

We offer preliminary training and ongoing support to teachers interested in implementing our action civics curriculum in-house without a Democracy Coach on the following topics:

- Introduction to GC and Action Civics
- Democratic Classroom Pedagogy
- Local Government Guidance



- Civics Day Prep
- Action Planning Expertise

### [The Institute for Community Research](#)

The Institute for Community Research conducts research in collaboration with community partners to promote justice and equity in a diverse, multiethnic, multicultural world. One of their areas of work includes participatory action research (PAR).

### [Participatory Action Research & Organizational Change](#)

This was a website created for a Ph.D. research methods course. It provides some useful theoretical and practical resources on PAR.

### [Research Hub for Youth Organizing and Education Policy](#)



[Participatory Action Research Toolkit:  
An Introduction to Using PAR as an Approach to Learning, Research and Action](#)

[Amplifying Student Voice: Resources for Action Civics and Youth Activism](#)

This website offers curriculum and assessment resources for students developing policy arguments as part of action civics or YPAR projects. The rubric, in particular, can be a vehicle to help groups prepare to make high quality public presentations that includes problem framing and calls to action.

[The Public Science Project](#)

We believe social science can play an important role in the struggle for social justice. Participatory Action Research (PAR) provides a critical framework for making science – systematic inquiry and analysis – a public enterprise. Allied with feminist, critical race, and indigenous theory, PAR is an approach to research that values the significant knowledge people hold about their lives and experiences. PAR positions those most intimately impacted by research as leaders in shaping research questions, framing interpretations, and designing meaningful research products and actions. With these commitments, The Public Science Project collaborates with academics, community organizations, schools, prisons, and public institutions to design, conduct, and support research and practice aimed at interrupting injustice. Click here for **our mission** and more information on our **history**, **research**, **projects**, **training institutes**, and workshops.

One of their training institutes includes the Critical Participatory Action Research Institute (CPAR), designed to introduce the theory, methods, and ethics of critical participatory action research (CPAR) to graduate students, faculty, and members of community based organizations. Through seminars, roundtables, and hands-on workshops with experienced researchers, participants gain the necessary skills and knowledge to integrate a critical PAR approach into their scholarship, research, and/or organizing.

[Stanford Graduate School of Education John W. Gardner Center for youth and their communities](#)

As a center for rigorous research, deeply rooted in the principles of community youth development, our interdisciplinary team focuses on questions our community partners raise about issues that matter to youth. Our diverse research staff have backgrounds in anthropology, economics, education, information systems, political science, psychology, public policy, and sociology. We count among our ranks a lawyer, a choreographer, an environmentalist, and an architect. Collectively, we represent expertise in research design and methods, community

engagement, schools and school districts, youth development, and education policy. We share a strong commitment to youth, families, and communities, and to fostering a collaborative youth-sector approach to research that practitioners and policymakers can use to effect change. Working in deep partnership with the community, we build capacity to make data-driven improvements in youth services and outcomes.

Their publication [Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning \(YELL\)](#) is a good resource for program staff, teachers, and community leaders.

#### [The UC Davis Center for Regional Change](#)

Launched in 2007, the CRC is a catalyst for innovative, collaborative, and action-oriented research. It brings together faculty and students from different disciplines, and builds bridges between university, policy, advocacy, business, philanthropy and other sectors. The CRC's goal is to support the building of healthy, equitable, prosperous, and sustainable regions in California and beyond.

#### [The University of Michigan Prevention Research Center](#)

The Prevention Research Center at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, established in 1998, promotes safe and healthy futures through prevention research. One of their key programs is the [Youth Empowerment Solutions \(YES\)](#)

YES is an evidence-based program that empowers youth to make positive changes in their communities and to work with adults who support their efforts. The goals of the YES program are to: 1) provide youth with opportunities for meaningful involvement in preventing youth violence and creating community change; 2) enhance the ability of adults to support youth in an empowerment framework; and 3) change the social and physical environment to reduce and prevent violence (especially youth violence). YES includes three essential elements: 1. Youth empowerment activities; 2. Training for adult staff and volunteers; 3. Community development projects that youth design and implement with support from adults.

#### [Youth Leadership Institute](#)

Youth Leading and Creating Equitable Communities, otherwise known as YLI, has engaged young people in increasing healthy food access, decreasing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, and creating opportunities for youth civic engagement, advocacy, and philanthropy. Between the year 2000 and 2015 youth leaders in the Youth Leadership Institute programs collectively organized and successfully advocated for the passage of more than 30 ordinances to reduce social and retail access to tobacco and alcohol, increase parent accountability, restrict payday lending, and increase highway and pedestrian safety.

YLI's Training and Consulting Services has increased the number of trainings offered and currently facilitates trainings both nationally and internationally. Topics include Building Youth Adult Partnerships, Environmental Prevention, Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol, Communities of practice for educators building youth voice in schools, etc.

[Youth Participatory Action Research Hub \(YPAR Hub\)](#)

This website has the resources to help guide you through YPAR and provides several examples of the process of YPAR and YPAR in action.

[Youth Participatory Action Research: A Review of the Literature](#)