

La Plata County Children, Youth and Family Master Planning Process Committee Report

This report represents the work of two committees, Youth Development and Education and After School Programming. They worked separately, with each developing their own recommendation and report. However, the basic premise for each is that young people should be greater contributors to both the decisions that impact them and to the learning in which they engage. Due to these significant similarities and overlaps, the consultant determined it would be best to combine them. This combined report begins with a system of youth engagement and divides the approaches into those that impact the community and those that impact schools. This combining of reports in no way should detract from the targeted work of either committee or to the importance of each committee's recommendation. What we hope is generated is a more comprehensive and connected system of engagement throughout all of the systems within the county.

Key Focus Areas: Youth Development (YD) & Education and After School Programming (EASP)

YD Committee Contributors:

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In addition to those who served on the committees the following contacts and information contributed significantly to their decision-making:

- A significant number of the committee participants' co-workers and other professional contacts were interviewed.
- 972 students in grades 6-12 who were administered the Developmental Assets[®] survey and their responses weighed heavily on the recommendations.

- The EASP committee also created a survey that that administered to 117 middle and high school students and they held a town meeting in Ignacio both of which produced valuable insights.

What was the vision your committee used to drive its process?

The YD Committee's vision is "**Opportunities, resources, and choices to thrive**"

The EASP Committee's vision is "**Empowered to learn.**"

How did your committee define thriving in relationship to its key focus area?

Both committees contributed to, and supported, the following thriving definition:

Thriving youth and adults are steadily growing towards and becoming people with a positive sense of self, nurturing and responsible family members, effective communicators, people who make healthy life choices, involved community members and responsible global citizens, innovative problem solvers and appliers of a creative process, exemplary workers and lifelong learners, and caring and ethical individuals.

The YD committee determined that the vast array of La Plata County youth serving organizations already provide services that address the physical, mental and social needs of youth, so the committee determined that the most strategic approach would be to focus on the thriving indicator of becoming "Involved community members and responsible global citizens". However, it also believes that the strategies would also positively and directly impact these other thriving indicators:

- Effective communicators;
- Innovative problem solvers and appliers of a creative process; and,
- Exemplary workers and lifelong learners.

The EASP committee believes that while its recommendation and supporting strategies will most closely support the development of the "Exemplary workers and lifelong learners" indicator it also believes that it will also positively and directly impact these other thriving indicators:

- People with a positive sense of self;
- Effective communicators;
- People who make healthy life choices;
- Involved community members and responsible global citizens; and,
- Innovative problem solvers and appliers of a creative process.

Both committee's felt that these thriving indicators are not only under-addressed, but the lack of focus they currently receive is a primary reason for the other thriving indicators not reaching their full potential. Research has become increasing clearer as to the all around benefits to young people who are part of the decision-making that impacts them. When young people become part of creating their community, school, neighborhood, or organization's social contracts they are far less likely to break or not support those contracts. They are also far more likely to become lifelong contributors to the vitality of the community.

What is your committee's strategic recommendation?

The YD and EASP committees recommend that a comprehensive, countywide youth engagement system be created that ensures all youth, in harmony with adults and elders, can be meaningfully involved in the decisions, structures and processes that affect their thriving. This system will be one that marries the importance of learning with the power of applying that learning in meaningful ways. At a minimum this system will be supported and implemented within local municipal governments, in private and public educational systems, and in those service organizations that offer services to youth people. These systems will work together to create and maintain a seamless system of community engagement and service learning.

Recommendation Category: The above recommendation will need to have **policies** that support it and ongoing and comprehensive **initiatives** adopted to ensure successful implementation.

Policy: The committees recommend that each municipal governing body (County Commissioners, Durango City Council, Bayfield Board of Trustees and Ignacio Board of Trustees) and the School Boards for Districts 9-R, 10 JT-R, and 11JT adopt the appropriate following policy statement: (We recommend that each political entity pass the same policy inserting their name where appropriate within the Municipality Policy Recommendation and that each school district do the same within the School District Policy Recommendation.)

Municipality Policy Recommendation: (Using La Plata County as the example)

In partnership with the City of Durango, the towns of Ignacio and Bayfield, La Plata County acknowledges its responsibility to the children youth and families residing in the county and commits to support them on their journey toward thriving.

A proven way to increase the likelihood that young people (those of middle and high school age) will, not only thrive, but will also increase the likelihood of their remaining or returning to the community, is to ensure that they have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the decisions, structures and processes that affect them. It is also critical that our youth have access to the resources needed to build the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to enable them to become meaningful contributors.

Therefore, La Plata County commits to creating and supporting a youth civic engagement structure that ensures the county will benefit from the insights and efforts of young people, especially when we are addressing the issues that impact them.

We also commit to participate in a countywide initiative that will bring together the efforts of the municipalities, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and the public and private educational systems in supporting the development of young people as resources to the vitality and effectiveness of the County.

School District Policy Recommendation: (Using District 11 JT as the example)

In partnership with the School Districts 9-R, 10 JT-R, and the other private schools operating in La Plata County, District 11 JT acknowledges its responsibility to the children, youth and families attending our schools and continues to commit support to them on their journey toward learning and thriving.

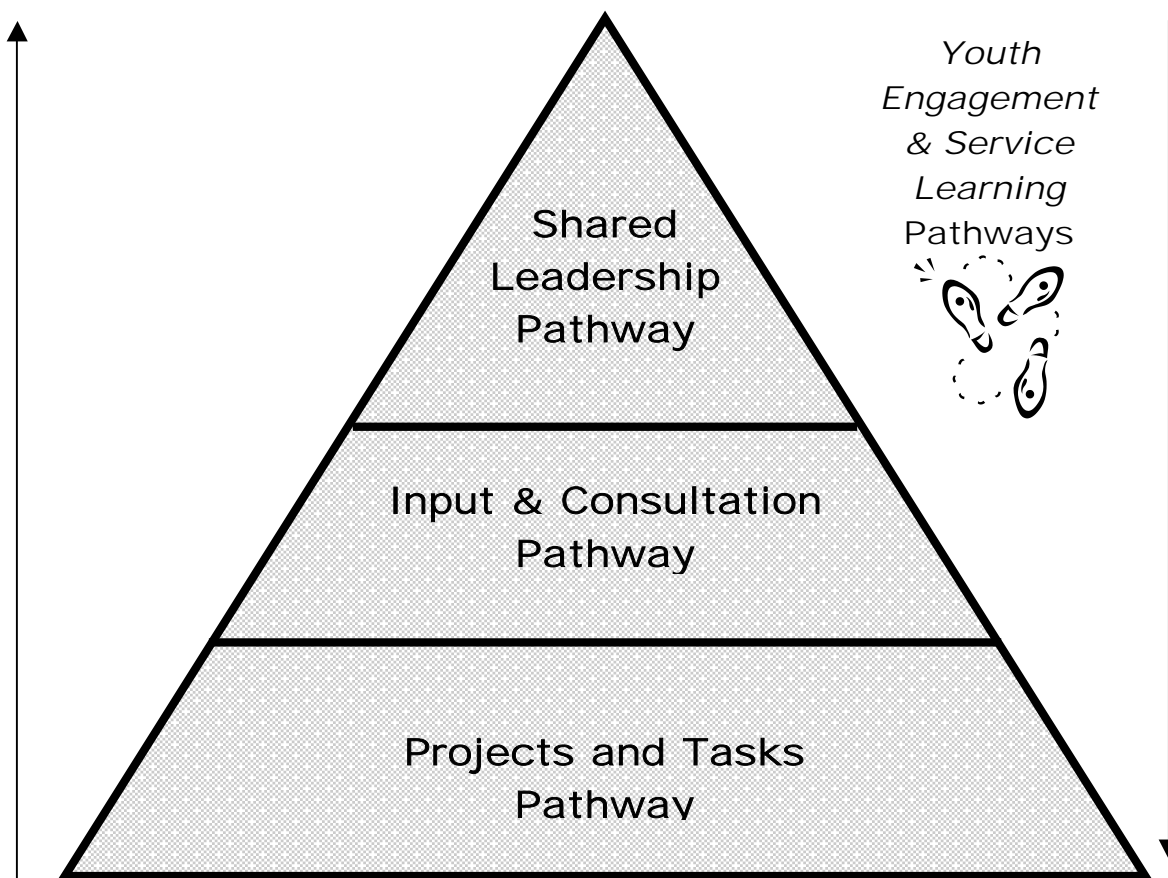
A proven way to increase the likelihood that students will, not only increase their ability to both learn and thrive, but will also increase the likelihood of them helping to create a more caring educational environment within the schools they attend, is to ensure that they have opportunities to meaningfully contribute to the educational decisions, structures and processes that affect them. It is also critical that our youth have access to the resources needed to build the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to enable them to become meaningful contributors.

Therefore, District 11 JT commits to creating and supporting a service learning structure that ensures that our school district and the community we serve will benefit from the insights and efforts of our students, especially when we are addressing the issues that impact them.

We also commit to participate in a countywide initiative that will bring together the efforts of the municipalities, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and the public and private educational systems in supporting the development of young people as resources to the vitality and effectiveness of the County.

Initiative: The initiative aspect of the recommendation is to create the youth engagement/service learning initiative needed to ensure that the policy statement cited above can be realized. This youth engagement/service learning initiative needs to be designed to ensure that every La Plata County young person interested in making contributions to his or her community, school, neighborhood or the organization to which he or she belongs, can access the kinds of opportunities that make the best use of his or her talents and gifts.

Within any engagement/service learning opportunity, people choose to participate at varying levels, depending on interest, availability, skill, or the ultimate goal of the activity in which the participant is engaged. For young people it is no different; yet, most adults limit their vision of a teenagers’¹ level of interest and their potential to help others or impact the community (Irby, Ferber, & Pittman, 2001). Thus, we propose a model of youth engagement/service learning with multiple pathways, represented by three layers of a triangle. The three pathways, beginning with the foundation, describe an increase in the complexity of the role of the young person as an engaged citizen/student and a corresponding potential for impact on a community, school, neighborhood or organization. This model, developed in Hampton, VA, was the recipient of the 2005 Innovation in American Government award from Harvard University.



¹ While some of the citations in this document refer to teenagers, the recommendation is intended for all La Plata County youth, not just teenagers.

Projects and Tasks

The myriad volunteer activities available to young people to be helpful and serve others constitute the first pathway of our triangle. Most communities/schools/organizations have a host of these opportunities, scattered throughout their systems/institutions. They are short-term, often “hands on,” activities requiring few specific skills and minimal training. The Projects and Tasks Pathway can offer an almost unlimited variety of options for participation with specific issues that offer a positive experience to individuals. Young people participating in projects, tasks, and service can participate in trail maintenance projects, pass out campaign literature, provide support school teachers and administrators, collect canned goods for a food drive, conduct surveys, organize neighborhood clean-ups and recruit their peers to get involved. They are making a difference by giving of their time and talent or providing a needed service to the community.

Input and Consultation

This pathway is an advisory function. Here young people enhance the decision-making and problem solving of adults by adding a “youth voice” into processes usually dominated by an adult perspective. Although adults ultimately maintain the authority to decide, the unique perspective provided by young people impacts those decisions. Advisory opportunities can be short or long-term commitments, generally requiring skills in listening, presentation, and analysis of the issues in question, which may be broad or specific in nature. Where Project and Task Pathway activities often impact an individual who is the recipient of a service, such as tutoring or volunteering in a nursing home, Input Pathway activities usually impact groups or organizations that benefit from the input provided. Youth-serving organizations, schools, and local government may provide opportunity for advisory-based engagement in the form of focus groups, advisory boards, “speakouts,” and opportunities to assist in data analysis and program development.

Shared Leadership

This pathway offers the greatest potential for impact on community/school/organizational change. Here youth work “shoulder to shoulder” with adults, sharing responsibility for activity and outcome. Many take on leadership roles far beyond those normally afforded others of their age, thus changing community/school/organizational change norms of who is “at the table.” This type of engagement carries a greater need for skill and commitment, and usually implies a focus on broader areas of impact—policy, strategic planning, and systems change. Young people in the Shared Leadership Pathway may work within systems as board members or paid employees, or outside of systems as lobbyists or activists. Wherever they choose to focus their energies, they become part of deliberative processes focused on the decision-making that impacts the lives and well-being of youth and their communities.

Each pathway is an important element in an overall system of youth engagement/service learning. Whether the system encompasses an entire community, or is reflected within a school, organization or a grass roots initiative, the same principles of the triangle apply. The arrow on the right side of the diagram points to an increase in potential opportunities offered and the corresponding number of potential participants. The arrow on the right indicates the increased potential for community change and the corresponding need for higher levels of skill. While the number of individuals tends to decrease with opportunities further up the triangle, the potential for impact increases.

La Plata County, the municipalities within the county, the school districts, neighborhoods and youth serving organizations wanting to increase the number of youth involved would be well served to include all three pathways of activity. Not only does this increase the possibility of attracting the greatest variety and number of youth, it increases the potential for impact on multiple issues of social concern.

Youth Civic Engagement/Service Learning Examples

Projects and Tasks	Input and Consultation	Shared Leadership
<p style="color: red;">Community service projects within a youth corps, school or community-based club and organization</p> <p>Curriculum-based service learning in school and after-school settings</p> <p style="color: red;">Youth-to-youth mentoring</p> <p>Youth Speaker's Bureaus</p> <p style="color: red;">Neighborhood Youth Engagement</p> <p>School/parent/community service projects</p> <p style="color: red;">Youth-led volunteer projects</p> <p>Youth website design and maintenance</p> <p style="color: red;">Youth activism grants</p> <p>Teen event planning</p> <p style="color: red;">Red Cross youth prepared to assist in emergencies</p> <p>Kids Voting Projects</p>	<p>Superintendent's Advisory Groups</p> <p style="color: red;">Principal's Student Advisory Groups (all secondary schools)</p> <p>Recreation Youth Advisory Groups</p> <p style="color: red;">Organizational Youth Advisory Boards</p> <p>Committees on People with Disabilities</p> <p style="color: red;">Community "speakouts"/ youth forums</p> <p>Youth Task Force for School Investment Panels</p> <p style="color: red;">Volunteer Opportunities Youth Advisory Councils</p> <p>Neighborhood Youth Advisory Boards</p> <p style="color: red;">Developmental Assets Mobilization youth teams</p> <p>Curriculum-based service learning in school and after-school settings</p>	<p style="color: red;">Youth-Community-Oriented Policing Effort (neighborhood & school-based partnerships)</p> <p>Youth Planners (High school-age youth work in planning departments)</p> <p style="color: red;">Youth Commissions (all-youth policy level board)</p> <p>Citizen Rights Commissions (youth voting members)</p> <p style="color: red;">Neighborhood Commissions (youth voting members)</p> <p>Parks & Recreation Advisory Boards (youth voting members)</p> <p style="color: red;">Youth & adult training/consulting teams</p> <p>Youth philanthropy</p> <p style="color: red;">Teen center design and planning committees</p>

An important lesson that has emerged from successful youth engagement/service learning initiatives is to view the triangle as a hierarchy of opportunity rather than a hierarchy of individuals with corresponding value placed on their level of engagement. Like adults, many young people want to participate only in the Projects and Tasks Pathway. Their desire for meaningful involvement may coincide with limited available time or different interests, yet it still must allow them roles as engaged and competent citizens. A strong foundation of these activities provides the scope of opportunities for youth to test their affinity toward civic involvement; the more opportunities, the more young people can find something of interest to them. This type of engagement is the very core of community-based volunteerism and service learning. Once involved, opportunities open up for young people as they are exposed to new information, new skills, and new relationships. As they gain confidence, experience success, and taste the excitement of impacting change, their interest grows in the other pathways. If the scope of opportunities is crafted as a system, with municipalities, schools and service organizations working together, the likelihood for movement within the triangle increases. Often adults will notice youth volunteers who have passion for an issue and refer them to advisory opportunities. Young people who never considered board or commission work are introduced to public meetings by other youth. Youth in Shared Leadership roles are exposed to new volunteer service opportunities. The result is a rich and diverse pool of youth leaders, passionate about their role in *their* community, school or organization. Joelle Riddle, Doug Lyon and Jenny Bruell had an opportunity to spend three days learning and experiencing the Hampton community's youth engagement and service learning system. They marveled at the level of the work tackled by young people, but were even more amazed that the young people did not resemble a stereotype of youth leadership. Because a young person may have started in a neighborhood group and gained skills along the way, he or she may occupy a role that in other communities tends to attract only a few "superstars."

Those in leadership roles within La Plata County's municipalities, schools or organizations need to guard against assumptions that place young people in pre-determined citizenship or service roles, or practices that limit their access to any level of engagement in which they might be interested. As Irby, Ferber, and Pittman (2001) point out, young people must be exposed to multiple action pathways that provide "ongoing options for meaningful participation in organizations and activities that they believe will make a difference to someone."

To ensure that a comprehensive youth engagement/service learning initiative such as this is successful the committees support the following guiding principles.

- Municipal, educational and organizational leaders, both elected and hired, must view the meaningful engagement of young people as a significant contribution to their learning and to the

success of the community and their institutions. They must agree that it is important to harness this “common wisdom” among their employees and among the public, and they must work hard to build support for the idea that a valuable tool in the solution to “youth problems” is creating a supportive and caring community, not just ‘fixing kids’. There needs to be an understanding of the importance of investing in all youth as part of the solution, rather than only labeling and focusing on youth at risk and seeing them as the problem.

- ❑ Young people join groups, volunteer and gain passion for their work when they learn to know and trust a group of caring adults who “get it.” Youth need skill building, guidance and support to be effective, not adults who dictate how things will be or abdicate all responsibility to them. When youth know elected officials by name, meet regularly with their principals, form personal relationships with adult allies, and have the opportunity to give honest feedback, their commitment increases. For real change to occur this must become the common practice. Leaders must also recognize that this is an ongoing process because existing young people will become adults and new young people will be entering the youth civic engagement/service learning process each year.
- ❑ Engaging young people must be an inclusive process. A county and school-wide youth civic engagement initiative will require participation that is representative of the diversity of county’s youth. All county youth should have the opportunity to have meaningful roles in government, neighborhood, organizational and school-based leadership groups as well as to benefit from service learning opportunities in all of their areas of study. An effort will also need to be made to attract and ensure access to the rich diversity of youth living in the county. It will also be important that youth aren’t forced to participate because it will be good for them. Sentencing a youth to community service does a disservice to both the youth and to the youth engagement/service learning system. This said we recognize that young people who may have been labeled as high-risk, deviant, or who have been otherwise negatively stereotyped must have the same access to these opportunities as every other young person. We suggest that the municipalities, schools and service organizations and systems start focusing more on where a young person wants to go rather than where he or she has been.

What was the support data used to arrive at this recommendation?

Each committee arrived at basically the same recommendation by reviewing different state-of the art literature. The YD committee reviewed the youth development and youth engagement information and married those findings with the insights and experience of those who served on the committee. The EASP committee reviewed state-of the-art literature from educational sources, serving learning, community building and also by using the insights and experience of those serving on the EASP committee and almost 200 other citizens from the community.

YD Committee findings:

The work of Search Institute, the Forum for Youth Investment, National 4-H Council and the Master Plan consultant’s company, Onsite-Insights were explored. We also explored the work done in Hampton, Virginia and Portland, Oregon, the country’s leaders in the area of youth engagement.

In the recent Developmental Asset® survey, administered to 6th – 12th grade youth in La Plata County’s three school districts, the results indicated that:

- ❑ 75 % of La Plata County youth believe that the adults in the community don’t value them;
- ❑ 68 % believe they are not viewed as resources to their community, school or neighborhood;
- ❑ 57 % that they are not involved in any form of service; and,
- ❑ 72 % report not having more than 3 adult role models in their lives.

A national survey done by Princeton Survey Research Associates, Inc found that almost all young people believe they can contribute to making their community a better place to live – 30% think their efforts can make a big impact, 43% think they can have a moderate impact, and 20% think they can have a small impact. Only 6% believe they cannot have any impact at all.

Other national research findings included:

- 59% of teenagers report volunteering in the past year compared to 49% of adults (Volunteering and Giving Survey)
- 87% of young people say, “making a difference in the life of someone close to you is important”. They rate this much higher than they do “being of service to your community and being involved in community affairs”. (Leadership for a New Century)
- Young males and females appear to be participating at similar rates. (Volunteering and Giving Survey)
- The most frequently cited reasons teens gave for volunteering are: 1) they felt compassion toward people in need; 2) they could do something for a cause that was important to them; and 3) they believed that if they helped others, others would help them. (Volunteering and Giving Survey)
- “Contrary to the stereotype of young adults being aloof and devoid of deep convictions, today’s youth have a strong sense of values and principles, and a well-defined direction for contributing to their community and country.” (Leadership for a New Century)
- Fewer than 5% of surveyed youth cited gaining skills or experience as the reason they volunteer for community-based organizations. (Young People as Volunteers)
- The most promising strategy for increasing youth participation is asking them. (Volunteering and Giving Survey)
- Nearly 75% of adults who belonged to a youth group when young, currently volunteer as compared to a 34.6% volunteer rate among those who did not. (Volunteering and Giving Survey)
- 64.3% of youth currently volunteering have seen someone in their family or someone they admire help others, compared to 35.7% who had not. (Volunteering and Giving Survey)
- 51% of young people who say they got a chance to make key decisions rated their experience at their organization as excellent, compared to 29% who did not get these opportunities. (Community Involvement Survey)
- 83.3% of youth report that developing leadership skills is a very important benefit of volunteering. (Community Involvement Survey)
- More young people (73%) than adults (66%) believe that they can impact making their community a better place to live. (Community Involvement Survey)

The committee also cites the research done by Shepherd Zeldin, Ph.D., Annette Kusgen McDaniel, Dimitri Topitzes and Matt Culvert of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and cited in their 2000 Youth in Decision-Making report. (The National 4-H Council sponsored this report.) In this report the researchers discovered that without question, involving young people in decision-making promotes positive youth development. But they also found that not only do the youth benefit, but also so do adults and so do the institutions in which young people are involved.

The research found that adults benefited from youth involvement experiences in the following ways:

- ❑ Adults experience the competence of youth first-hand, and begin to perceive young people as legitimate, crucial contributors to organizational decision-making processes. This was especially evident when the youth were stereotyped by the adult as disaffected, antisocial youth.
- ❑ Working along side of youth helped to increase an adult’s commitment and energy towards the issue, project or effort in which they were both involved.
- ❑ Adults felt more effective and more confident in working with and relating to all young people after being part of a positive youth and adult partnership.

- ❑ Those adults who engaged youth within organizations came to better understand the needs and concerns of youth and became more attuned to programming issues, making them more likely to reach outside of the organization and share their new knowledge and insights. They gain a stronger sense of community connectedness.

The research also found that organizations that involved young people at all levels of decision-making benefited in the following ways:

- ❑ The principles and practices of youth involvement became embedded within the organizational culture. Youth infusion within the organization is enhanced as a result of having youth involved in governance roles.
- ❑ When youth are involved they help adults to clarify and bring focus to their organization's mission.
- ❑ Adults and the organization as a whole become more connected and responsive to the youth of their organization as well as the entire community. Youth in decision-making roles help make the work of the organization more relevant to the lives of youth.
- ❑ Organizations that meaningfully engage youth are more attractive to Foundation and government funding. Youth also can serve as powerful spokespersons for the organization when pitches are being made to local and non-local funders.

The research also found that effective decision-making in organizations requires the complementary skills, experience and contributions of both youth and adults. Youth bring energy, fresh perspectives, knowledge of young people, and a unique sense of community to decision-making. Adults bring organizational and administrative experience, allowing youth to concentrate on more mission-driven and action-oriented aspects of decision-making.

EASP Committee Findings:

This committee drew on expertise and insights from a broad representation of community members. Participants in our process included schoolteachers, middle- and high-school students, youth development program administrators and staff, non-profit professionals, educational researchers, and other community members with experience working on school and community programs in La Plata County. We conducted a survey of 117 students whose feedback on the availability and quality of academic support and after school programs have also informed our recommendation. We also integrated the results from the La Plata County Developmental Assets survey into all of our conversations and decision-making.

Drawing from our personal experiences, our research and the survey results allowed the committee to gain a broad understanding of the amount, accessibility, utilization and quality of after school programming, service learning efforts and educational supports that exist throughout the county. The committee's interactions with high school students who were involved throughout our study process, and in a Town Meeting they organized helped us gain a much deeper and broader understanding of the county's current educational realities. This group of students served as a focus group, providing both input into our discussions, as well as feedback on existing programs and our committees' recommendation. These students reviewed our final draft report in detail, and we have incorporated their concerns and input.

The most relevant findings from our research include:

1. The condition of "thriving" does not start or end at a particular age. It is a lifelong journey that marries the experiences of the individual with quality learning and experiential opportunities. These opportunities are most effective when available to people of all ages to engage, intergenerationally, around learning and collaboration. The committee calls on the community to engage people of all ages as life-long learners because youth and children thrive best when they

are supported by adults committed to their own learning and thriving (focus group discussion, Town Meeting, 2/11/08, La Plata Developmental Assets Survey #4, 7, 8, 14).

2. Adolescents will have less of a likelihood of thriving if they haven't learned constructive community participation throughout their childhood. Adults are more likely to contribute to the education and support of the community if they have experienced the benefits of social participation—and learned the rewards of contributing to their community starting at a young age. People do not automatically know how to participate in meaningful community activities or recognize the individual and social benefits of them. Many programs are not as successful as they could be because participants have not learned how to constructively participate in community activities to bring about long-term and sustainable results (focus group discussion, Town Meeting, 2/11/08).
3. Youth want the chance to participate in meaningful community-based learning and community building, but are prevented from participating because of transportation, geographical access (when events occur in Durango, youth from Bayfield and Ignacio don't have time or means for travel), and/or the costs to participate. (EE&ASP Survey #2; La Plata Developmental Assets Survey # 4, 5, 8, 9, 17; focus group discussion, Town Meeting, 2/11/08)
4. Many community organizations exist in La Plata County with the mission of increasing learning opportunities in our communities. Unfortunately, most youth do not have the chance to participate in these, or to make such community participation part of a *learning* process that will lead to academic achievement and increased community contributions. Community service alone (such as volunteering at the hospital or picking up trash in public areas) does not bring about the biggest changes in young peoples' sense of community responsibility and community efficacy. Community participation should be a learning process, preferably integrated with school curriculum or other avenues for connecting learned information to their community action (focus group discussion, Town Meeting, 2/11/08; committee meeting, 2/25/08).
5. Young people learn that they have value from the community around them. Only through having meaningful ways to participate in and contribute to their community, school and service organization will youth learn that they are capable of constructive social action, and that they are responsible for bringing about positive changes in La Plata County. Adults' own actions are a huge influence on how young people see their roles in their community (La Plata Developmental Assets Survey # 7, 8; focus group discussion, focus group discussion, Town Meeting, 2/11/08).
6. Many people in La Plata County lack opportunities for community connections. These might include public service, civic organizations, arts programming, or other clubs or organizations. Youth in particular suffer from this lack, because it leaves them without the chance to develop social competencies that are crucial for future social participation. The existing social organizations in La Plata County offer an amazing opportunity for increased connection and learning, especially in collaboration with schools and municipalities. However, these often go under utilized. (La Plata Developmental Assets Survey # 3, 4, 5, 8, 14, 17, 26, 27, 32, 37, 38, 39; focus group discussion, focus group discussion, Town Meeting, 2/11/08; EE&ASP Survey #1)

While the focus of this committee is on Education and After School Programming, our research consistently identified several factors that lead us to recommend countywide participation. First, educational excellence is attained not only through classroom learning, but is the result of an array of experiences young people have in their lives (Winter, 2003). An array of studies have found that “adolescents who spend time in communities that are rich in developmental opportunities for them experience less risk and show evidence of higher rates of positive development” (Eccles & Gootman, 2002, p. 11; see also: Search Institute, 2005). When young people experience a culture of learning, exploration, and community connections throughout their lives, they are more likely to achieve at higher levels in school as well (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

La Plata County bears a promising potential for rich community collaboration to foster an environment of learning and thriving. The wealth of community organizations reflect the strengths and interests of our community, and carry opportunities for exactly the type of school-organization-community collaboration that can offer opportunities for communitywide service learning and connection.

This is possible when municipalities, non-profits, private companies, and other social institutions commit themselves to offering all members of the community the chance for involvement, asset-based collaboration and learning. Young people in particular need to have opportunities to develop various aspects of their identity—social, academic, civic—that lead to academic success and effective social and civic engagement (McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994). Youth who participate in community-based activities gain long-term benefits from relationships with adults and peers, as well as the developing social skills and taking on broader roles in their community (O’Donoghue, 2006). These activities can improve how youth see themselves as being valued in their community, which was identified as a major concern for La Plata County (Strobel, Osberg, & McLaughlin, 2006; Youniss et al., 2002). In addition, young people have opportunities to develop social competencies, whether through service learning, civic engagement, workplace, environmental, or social service contexts. The more opportunities young people have to learn, experiment and succeed in various facets of social life and employment, the more likely they are to see themselves as competent and thus to take increasing responsibility for themselves and their communities (Mediratta, 2007).

Assets for Colorado Youth’s report on “Creating Social Change: The Growth of a Statewide Movement” (2003) documented two main domains where community investments in youth can have strong impact on young people:

“The first domain, strengthening youth, includes a sense of belonging, stronger and more effective relationships, self-confidence, skill building and a positive future orientation. The second major domain of impacts describes the emergence of youth asset builders” (p. 55).

This report also identified the potential for community involvements to bring about increased empathy for others, commitment to meaningful contributions to their community, and to recognize their own ability to have a positive impact on other peoples’ lives as well as their own future.

The National Research Council and National Institutes of Health’s Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth convened a comprehensive study (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) that identifies twenty-seven factors that foster social assets and lead to positive youth development. These range from physical and psychological safety to participation in governance and rule-making; from opportunities to experience supportive adult relationships, to opportunities to make a contribution to one’s community and to develop a sense of being valued and of personal efficacy. They include emotional and moral support, a sense of belonging, and the chance to develop confidence in one’s personal efficacy while making a contribution to one’s community. Also important is that youth are able to develop a sense of being valued, and that they experience strong links between families, schools and the broader community (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). They make the point that young people do not need each of twenty-seven factors met; youth with a solid foundation in some factors can, according to this study, offset an absence of others. Thus, youth development programs can focus on a particular area, and still have an impact on participants’ broader social, academic, and civic development.

Eccles and Gootman (2002) identify myriad personal and social assets that “increase the healthy development and well-being of adolescents and facilitate a successful transition from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood” (p. 6). These include, among others, and in no particular order:

- Confidence in one’s personal efficacy
- Sense of personal autonomy/responsibility for self

- Rational habits of mind—critical thinking and reasoning skills
- Mastery motivation and positive achievement motivation
- Coherent and positive personal and social identity
- Pro-social and culturally sensitive values
- Connectedness—good relationships and trust with parents, peers, and other adults
- Sense of social place/integration—being connected and valued by larger social networks
- Attachment to pro-social institutions, such as school, religious or spiritual organizations, youth programs

As one should realize, these social assets, the Developmental Assets[®] developed by Search Institute and the generally agreed upon list of needed life skills are all in alignment with the Thriving definition developed by the citizens of La Plata.

Cultivation of these assets and life skills comes about through certain types of relationships and experiences. These most often occur through service learning experiences, in youth development programs, including mentoring, school-to-work transition programs, parenting skills, intergenerational collaboration, community gardens or park projects, or community arts and recreation activities (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Schools and other social institutions are increasingly recognizing the benefit of incorporating community involvement into their curricula (Service learning), which can result in increased attendance, higher academic achievement, higher graduation rates, and stronger academic and social identities, as well as increased sense of efficacy.

Service learning, is not required hours of service for graduation. Connecting all curricula to experiential learning opportunities that are continuously contributing to improving the schools, communities or the organizations in which they participate is what service learning is.

This promising model helps to make school more relevant, and to allow students to see evidence of their own social efficacy (Boyte & Skelton, 1997). Yates and Youniss report “Participation in extracurricular and service learning activities has also been linked to increases in interpersonal competence, self-concept, high school grade point average (GPA), school engagement, and educational aspirations . . . as well as to higher educational achievement, better job quality, more active participation in the political process and other types of volunteer activities, continued sport engagement, and better mental health during young adulthood” (Yates & Youniss, 1996, p. 867)

The most important factor of service learning is that young people have “opportunities to interact with caring adults and a diversity of peers who hold positive social norms and have high life goals and expectations” for youth participants (Eccles & Gootman, 2002, p. 8). In all cases, the goal is to provide youth with opportunities for social, emotional, cognitive, physical development necessary for positive progression toward constructive and fulfilling adulthood (Thriving) while also making major and meaningful contributions to schools, organizations and the community as a whole.

Expanded opportunities for people to participate in and contribute to meaningful service learning activities in their schools/organizations/communities are especially important for younger members of our society. Eccles, Barber, Stone, and Hunt (2003) have found that “constructive, organized activities are a good use of the adolescents’ time because such activities provide opportunities:

- (a) To acquire and practice specific social, physical, and intellectual skills that may be useful in a wide variety of settings including school;
- (b) To contribute to the well-being of one’s community and to develop a sense of agency as a member of one’s community;
- (c) To belong to a socially recognized and valued group;
- (d) To establish supportive social networks of peers and adults that can help in both the present and the future; and,

(e) To experience and deal with challenges.

In turn, these assets are predicted to facilitate both current levels of school engagement and achievement and subsequent educational and occupational attainment and to prevent the emergence of risky behavior patterns that can mortgage young people's future" (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003, pp. 866-867).

These potential benefits of increased community involvement in the learning of all La Plata County residents address several of the most alarming indicators on the Developmental Assets survey, including youth having useful roles in our community, being valued, and having quality relationships with adults that they trust and look to for guidance.

Furthermore, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) has found that people age 15-25 are less likely to engage in traditional types of civic engagement, such as conventional political participation, and that social trust is very low for this group (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002). Youth development programs can play a major role in fostering positive gains in this process. In his review of literature on "Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Positive Youth Development Outcomes", Nicholas Winter (2003) echoes that the institutions with which an individual is involved are vitally important to understanding that individual's involvement with public life. These institutions are the place where people learn the skills that foster participation and position them to be recruited into an activity. In addition, institutional involvements are an important mechanism for the creation and reinforcement of psychological identity. (p. 11)

"In summary, there is converging evidence from several different types of studies suggesting that involvement in constructive, non-academic activities both at school and in the community facilitates continued school engagement and academic achievement as well as other aspects of positive development during adolescence and into the early adulthood years." (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003, pp. 884-886)

Please explain your committee's justification for selecting this recommendation?

The YD Committee brainstormed the ideal situation for thriving in La Plata County and then identified gaps in each of four key areas. The Committee then identified strategic recommendations for each gap area:

- Mentoring: *Each young person has the opportunity to connect with a caring adult who provides support at an individual level.*
- Community Opportunities: *Youth in La Plata County will thrive because they are involved in the decisions that affect them.*
- Big Picture: *Youth have the freedom to freely explore what it means to be a healthy and happy human being.*
- Activities: *All youth in harmony with supportive adults have an equal voice in the future planning of La Plata County.*

The Committee collapsed these four recommendations into this single strategic recommendation. *A comprehensive countywide youth engagement system be created that ensures all youth, in harmony with adults and elders, can be meaningfully involved in the decisions, structures and processes that affect their thriving. At a minimum this system will be supported and implemented within local municipal governments, in private and public educational systems, and in those service organizations that offer services to youth people.*

The EASP committee, after outlining a clear vision of educational empowerment for all, and developing a common language around "education", "learning", "connectiveness", and "empowerment, began a series of outreach initiatives to gather ideas and identify gaps in the educational and after school

opportunities. To accomplish this we used surveys given to students countywide, a town meeting, numerous open committee meetings, literature research, collecting wisdom from all ages, and evaluating and analyzing the La Plata County Assets survey. The following was the primary results from these efforts:

Community Based Learning

Connecting youth and families to enriching, engaging, culturally competent and meaningful opportunities that offer skills and experience, and develop myriad connections between learners and community members, organizations, places, and to one's self. Youth work individually and/or in groups to connect and learn how to address community needs. Service Learning and Civic-Engagement were identified within this realm.

- *Service Learning* is an exciting and effective way to engage learners of all ages in their community. Service learning in schools is a learning **process** that values active learning and experimentation – and that continues to ask young people:
 - a. What did you learn?
 - b. What does it mean? and,
 - c. Now, what are you going to do, what actions can you take with the knowledge and experience you have gained?

Service learning is also a **method** because it includes intentional preparation, action, reflection, and celebration. And service learning is also a **philosophy** that young people are a community's greatest resource and asset, and that it is the responsibility of each school, organization and the community as a whole to help young people become democratic citizens.

Essential Elements of Effective Service-Learning

(Developed by Learn and Serve America, National Youth Leadership Council)

Components that support learning and service

- Effective service learning seeks to maximize student voice in selecting, designing, implementing, and evaluating the service-learning projects.
- Values diversity through its participants, its practice and its outcomes.
- Promotes communication and interaction with the community and encourage partnerships and collaboration.
- Students are prepared for all aspects of their service work including a clear understanding of task and role, the skills and information required by the task, awareness of safety precautions, as well as knowledge about and sensitivity to the people with whom they will be working.
- Reflection takes place before, during, and after service, uses multiple methods that encourage critical thinking, creativity, and is a central force in the design and fulfillment of curricular objectives.
- Multiple methods are designed to acknowledge, celebrate and further validate students' service work.

Elements for Learning

- Establishes clear learning goals that require the application of concepts, content and skills from the academic disciplines and involves students in the construction of their own knowledge.
- Learners are encouraged in tasks that challenge and stretch them cognitively and developmentally.
- Assessment is utilized in a way to enhance learning for all involved, as well as to document and evaluate how well the learners have met the goals.

Elements for Service

- Learners are engaged in service tasks that have clear goals, meet genuine needs in the community and have significant consequences for themselves and others.

- Employs formative and summative evaluation in a systemic evaluation of the service efforts and the outcomes

The EASP committee also explored community based learning as it pertained to civic engagement however, since the YD committee had already done extensive work on this topic and had created a recommendation that supported the EASP committee's findings it felt it should concentrate its recommendation on ensuring that a comprehensive and effective service learning initiative be implemented throughout the county's school districts and private schools. The EASP and YD initiatives should provide:

- Engaging, authentic, and enriching experiential learning opportunities, in and out of school.
- The structures that support countywide collaboration and the system to link information, services, availability, and access of county organizations and services. The Youth in Transition recommendation will be very useful in accomplishing this.
- A countywide system that supports meaningful youth and adult involvement and provides opportunities for partnerships with decision makers, directly or indirectly affecting their ability to thrive as lifelong learners.

These ideas merge naturally into a single strategic recommendation.

Creates a sustainable countywide system that empowers community member of all ages, as learners, to create and nurture authentic and engaging lifelong learning opportunities and a community culture of exploration and fulfillment. This system will include training, equitable access, information sharing, and other support to empower community organizations and institutions as well as individuals to foster a healthy community through meaningful connections.

This recommendation and the one proposed by the YD committee were then enhanced by merging the two into a single recommendation that will allow for a community, organizational and school partnership to meaningfully engage youth in a learning and empowerment process. The combined recommendation is:

A comprehensive countywide youth engagement system be created that ensures all youth, in harmony with adults and elders, can be meaningfully involved in the decisions, structures and processes that affect their thriving. This system will be one that marries the qualities of learning with the power of applying that learning in meaningful ways. At a minimum this system will be supported and implemented within local municipal governments, in private and public educational systems, and in those service organizations that offer services to youth people. These systems will work together to create a seamless system of community engagement and service learning.

What is this recommendation's overall intended impact on the healthy development of La Plata County's children and youth and/or how will it support its families?

Good things happen when the role of young people is expanded within a democratic society. When youth become volunteers, advisors, and partners they become essential contributors to the civic infrastructure (Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth, & Laco, 2003). In La Plata County we anticipate the following benefits will occur by instituting a comprehensive youth engagement system within the community, a comprehensive service learning system within the schools and a process to ensure the two remain connected to and supportive of each other. We believe that these benefits will occur in three primary areas: improvement in specific conditions; improved adult, local government, school, neighborhood and organizational decision-making; and increased social capital.

Improved Conditions

When young people tackle a specific issue or social problem, their ideas and energy can contribute to improved outcomes related to that issue or problem. This is true whether the process used is civic engagement or service learning. There are numerous examples of how this happens in communities that

have embraced a comprehensive youth engagement/serving learning model.

An example from Hampton's experience is:

Hampton was experiencing a serious problem with juvenile crime in two low-income neighborhoods. Youth were perceived as problems by neighbors and police, and a widespread mistrust of law enforcement existed throughout the youth population. Communities traditionally approach this type of issue with increased police presence, imposed curfews and surveillance, closed parks and playgrounds, and generally avoided contact with youth. Instead police, youth, and neighbors in Hampton were brought together for teambuilding and training, and together the group created solutions. Youth and officers developed activities together, socialized, built relationships, and worked on crime prevention. At the end of the year, according to police data on reported crime, there was a 13% and 19% overall reduction in crime in the respective neighborhoods and an accompanying 44% and 54% drop in specific juvenile-related crime. Now youth serve on the civic associations and one of the neighborhoods was awarded the Governor's Excellence in Community Safety Award.

In La Plata County we envision the following conditions being improved: *(Please note that we are not predicting these improvements since so much depends on other factors, which groups agree to participate, and on the effectiveness of the youth engagement system adopted through this plan. We do believe, based on examples from other successful communities that these improvements can be obtained.)*

- An increase in the number of youth who make a choice to avoid high-risk behaviors.
- An increase in the positive educational climate in all the schools.
- An increase in the number of thriving indicators reported by the youth of La Plata County.

Better Decisions

In hundreds of communities and in countless situations over the past 10-15 years, youth input has contributed to creative and successful solutions within local government, school reform, organizational reinvention and other community decision-making.

An example from Portland, Oregon's experience is:

On August 16, 2006 the Portland City Council passed a resolution adopting "Our Bill of Rights, Children and Youth," the nation's first bill of rights *for* children and youth written *by* children and youth that was adopted by local government. Developed by more than three thousand young people, the Bill serves as a tool to engage youth in the decision-making processes and evaluate existing youth programs and services. "Our Bill of Rights, Children and Youth" ensures that Multnomah County and the City of Portland support the rights of children and youth.

"Our Bill of Rights, Children and Youth" was adopted by Multnomah County in May of 2007 so it now guides the development of both City and County policy. The Bill serves as a tool to hold public officials accountable for children's welfare and gives youth a resource to support their best interests. The Bill is a constant reminder of the vital role of children and youth in shaping the future of the community.

In La Plata County we envision these better decisions being made: *(Again we are not specifically advocating for these decisions to be improved using an engagement process. That needs to be the decision of the youth and adult partnerships created by the initiative. We do believe, based on examples from other successful communities that these types of better decision-making can be obtained.)*

- Youth serving organizations will improve the connections between the services they provide and the thriving indicators needed by the young people they serve
- Using a service learning approach, the three school districts within La Plata County will ensure that their policies and procedures are leading to an optimal learning environment.

- Local municipalities will match their resource allocations to strategies that increase the development of thriving indicators in all children, youth and families.
- The blending of the service learning and the civic engagement initiatives will help increase the likelihood that children and youth throughout the county and the schools are viewed more as resources than simply as recipients.

Increased Social Capital

There is emerging research demonstrating that engaging young people in government, schools and the civic life of their community truly increases the social capital of the community. In addition to the previously untapped resource of hundreds of volunteers, the increased leadership skills and social efficacy of the youth population, there is an increase in civic behaviors among young adults. Examples from communities with fully entrenched youth civic engagement initiatives are demonstrating voting rates among eligible young adult voters well in excess of national averages. In addition, post-testing and exit interviews show that participants in youth civic engagement report gaining the skills of public deliberation, presentation, and activism, as well as a passion for affecting community change. Young adults who return after an absence from their youth civic engagement community also express disappointment when their college environment or new community does not afford them the same opportunities. Within successful and comprehensive service learning efforts students are shifting their roles as it pertains to ownership of their schools and their education. Students no longer view schoolwork as something done to them, but something that is done with them. Students and parents are joining with faculties and administrators to work together in creating more caring learning environments. It appears that engaging youth in their teen years is creating a new norm for the next generation; one of responsive, accessible government, parent/student/faculty driven schools, neighborhoods which people are proud to call home and a foundation for future civic engagement.

In La Plata County we envision the following increases in our social capital:

- La Plata County will experience an increase in the number of invested youth who either remain or return to live and work in the county.
- The numbers of hours young people spend making positive contributions to their community, schools, neighborhoods or organizations will significantly increase.
- The number of adults who seek to engage young people and subsequently the number of adult and youth partnerships will increase.

Who needs to be part of insuring this recommendation is realized?

- Governments – City Council, Town Trustees, and County Commissioners

It starts with the leadership, elected and appointed, of the municipalities because those in authority need to be leading the initiative. Of course it will take everyone to make it work, but unless government is solidly behind the recommendations of the children, youth and family master plan than the chances of any real change occurring is very limited. The committee also hopes that the different governing bodies can find ways to come together to make this effort one that is shared.

- Schools - Districts 9-R, 10 JT-R, and 11JT

Because young people are the focus of this recommendation it will be impossible to successfully implement the necessary strategies unless the school districts are supportive. Service learning is a well-documented approach to make learning more dynamic and, therefore, more valued by students. It will require that the districts infuse service learning into the curriculum while ensuring that it is integrated with the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). It will also require that the support and training needed to make this successful are provided and that support is given to encourage co-curricula and after school programming efforts. It will also require a major shift in the way business is conducted to include students in the districts' decision-making process. However, across the country this is becoming more the norm than the exception. Again, the committee hopes

that the different School Boards and administrative staffs can find ways to come together to make this effort one that is shared—not only among districts, but with the governing bodies as well.

- Community organizations that serve youth

The effectiveness of community-based organization (CBO) to positively impact the kinds of changes identified in this plan will only occur if the government and school leaders embrace and support its implementation. This is a resource issue, of course, but it's more an authority issue. CBO's have limited or no authority to affect community norms, nor do they have the mandate. La Plata County's CBO's also have resisted efforts to collaborate their efforts. We believe that increasing thriving is a collective effort not a fragmented one so we encourage CBO's to find ways to increase collaboration among themselves and with schools and the municipalities. .

- All community members

The reality is that for young people to feel like they are thriving everyone will need to play a role, including the young people themselves. Knowing what is available and how to access these opportunities plays a large role in the success of this initiative. Both communities, therefore strongly support the Youth In Transition recommendation of a countywide search engine that will inform and connect.

For this recommendation to be successfully implemented what shifts or changes (if any) are needed in the county's infrastructure?

The policy recommendations presented previously are the first infrastructure changes required. These create both the authority to move forward while standardizing the initiatives for future officials to follow. But these policy shifts will only be effective if it is coupled by an attitude shift about how young people in the county and in the schools are viewed. Therefore, we recommend that La Plata County's youth engagement/service learning initiative be influenced significantly by the work of William Lofquist, longtime proponent of community organizing on behalf of youth development. Lofquist (1989) presents a "Spectrum of Attitudes" describing a continuum of relationships, the attitudes of which affect the behaviors of one group of people toward another.

The three relationships—Object, Recipient, Resource—correspond to a range of possible attitudes—particularly attitudes adults may hold toward young people. While all three attitudes can be appropriate depending on circumstances, the choice of one over another in a youth civic engagement initiative can result in young people feeling isolated and disenfranchised, or included and valued. According to Lofquist, when adults view young people as Objects, the adult attitude suggests that they "know what's best for the young person" and have the right to determine the circumstances under which these youth function. For example, in public safety situations an Object attitude is necessary when an adult sets limits that will protect a child.

Lofquist then contrasts the Recipient attitude in which an adult has something of value and believes that providing it to a young person will be good for him or her. Job training programs exemplify an appropriate use of the Recipient attitude when young people must learn a particular skill or portion of knowledge from the experienced adult.

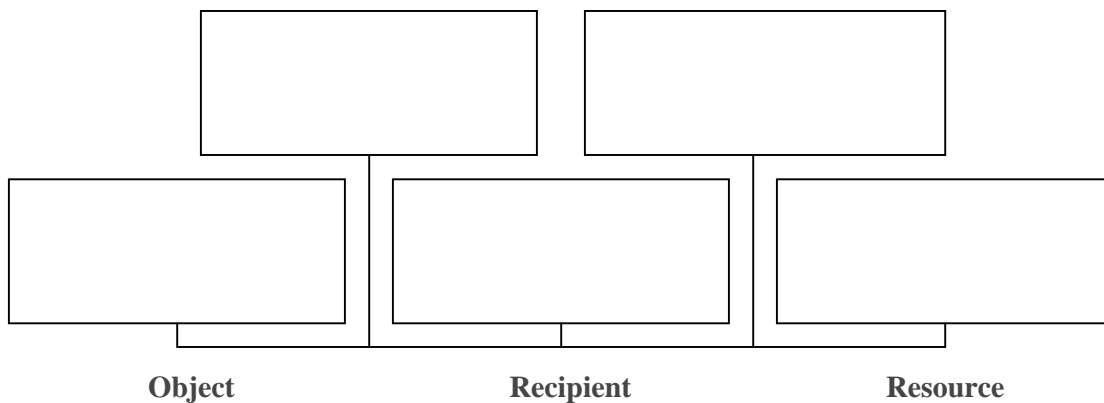
An adult with a Resource attitude believes young people bring something of value to a situation, such as a neighborhood planning effort, and that including them will enhance the adult's efforts. Approaching youth with a Resource attitude enhances many community situations; however, problems arise when adults are mired in one of the other approaches and are unable to switch to new behaviors.

In the first two attitudes, the focus of the interaction is on the well being of the young person—adults working on behalf of youth. In contrast, the objective of viewing another as a Resource is increased effectiveness, problem solving, and the well-being of a group, community or targeted situation. Personal development and enhanced self-esteem of the young person, rather than the focus, tend to surface as

byproducts of the experience of being treated as a Resource.

The Object, Recipient, Resource continuum, while deceptively simple, can be the hardest shift a community or school can make as it moves to implement a youth engagement/service learning initiative. While the language resonates with most of us, adult practice takes a long time to catch up with theory. Organizations can become fluent in the language that describe youth as recipients of their services, all the while youth continued to feel like objects when attending. Similarly, the more sophisticated the community becomes about the “youth as resources” concept, the more adults begin promoting the value of youth involvement in decision-making and youth as partners.

In many of these cases language, however important in describing intent, is not matched by behavior. The unfortunate beneficiaries of this problem are the youth who, will seize the opportunity for meaningful engagement, and subsequently be disappointed when their input was not heeded or their participation not valued. Our caution to the municipal, school and organizational leaders in La Plata County, is to use an expanded version of Lofquist’s continuum (see chart below) Observations of other communities and dialogue with young people have led us to conclude that adoption of a Resource attitude is a fundamental requisite for a successful youth engagement/service learning initiative. We believe that this will require a difficult shift in a community’s culture and recognize that takes time, new skills, and a tremendous commitment by both adults and young people. We recommend that the time be taken, the skills be learned and the commitment be made.



When youth engagement/service learning initiatives only involve young people because “it will be good for them,” the community and schools risk missing the tremendous benefit of the knowledge, skills, energy and insight of the youth. Unfortunately in much of La Plata County, children and adolescents are seen as a necessary burden that adults need to manage until such time that they become valuable (adult). La Plata will fail in its attempts to create strategies that sustain youth engagement/service learning over time if it doesn’t shift this attitude.

Thus, a successful youth engagement/service learning initiative, with its focus primarily on improving outcomes for schools, groups, organizations or communities rather than simply a benefit to participating youth, will require as many adults as possible to adopt a Resource attitude and behaviors. Unfortunately, this is neither common, nor easy because many adults have learned over time to either dictate or abdicate responsibility when working with youth, and operate from long-held needs to fix, help, teach, and provide. A resume rich in youth or classroom work does not guarantee that an adult will function well in this new partnership role. Furthermore, youth are not accustomed to new roles as advisor or decision-maker, and many need a great deal of training and experience to shed their compliant or aggressive behaviors when interacting with adults.

Placing a single young person on a Board or Commission does little to advance the engagement of youth in a community, as it does not create access for large numbers of youth—especially marginalized

youth—to decision-making, nor does it infiltrate the adult consciousness that would view them as valuable citizens. Some communities attempt to initiate youth engagement by creating board positions that often do little but create visibility for the attempt and, in the long run, reinforce stereo types between youth and adults for whom the experience was a negative one. In fact, starting with shared leadership opportunities without the widespread exposure and intergenerational connections afforded by the triangle's other two pathways often leads to frustration and disinvestment by the community and the youth as well.

In addition to the policy and attitudinal shift the following infrastructural changes will need to occur:

- Shift in the culture from the “bottom line” financial priorities to what is in the best interests of youth (thriving); both need to be balanced with equal representation
- Funding will need to support the implementation of this recommendation. This funding should include staff, FT at the county and PT in the other municipalities, to ensure oversight and implementation. These staff will be responsible for oversight of all of the plan's recommendations not just the Youth Development's committee.
- The training needed to ensure that youth and adults can work effectively together and that the attitudinal shifts required of youth and adults occur needs to be created and required.
- Organizations providing services to youth will need to revisit their missions and strategies to ensure they are optimizing their ability to increase thriving.
- A CBO (or a department within the county) will need to be identified to facilitate the extensive amount of training that will be needed to prepare young people and adult citizens, employees of youth serving organizations, and the leadership in the municipalities, schools and youth serving organizations.

What specific strategies for implementing this recommendation does your committee suggest?

- Work with the governing bodies of the four municipalities to approve the youth civic engagement policy and the three school districts to approve the service learning policy.
- Work with local leaders to identify funding to ensure that the strategies can be implemented and that there are sufficient resources to secure funding for operation and growth of initiatives. A word of caution about relying too much on external funding is that these funding sources have less commitment to the community and more to their ability to look good. Foundation and other non-local funding should be used for start up, capital expenditures, and one time needs.
- Create a youth engagement system based on the Hampton, VA model ensuring that young people are active participants in the development and implementation. Ensure that the opportunities are ones that will improve the thriving of the children, youth and families of La Plata.
 - Build upon existing opportunities to create an ever increasing number of projects, tasks and service opportunities for the youth of La Plata
 - Create an ever increasing number of input and consultation opportunities for the youth of La Plata
 - Create an ever increasing number of shared leadership opportunities for the youth of La Plata
- Integrate service learning into the curricula of the three school districts and any private schools interested in participating. This will require each district to identify a staff person who will be responsible for making the shifts needed to ensure success.
- Make sure the youth engagement and the service learning initiatives are fully integrated with other, that there is a strong alignment with the recommendations made by the Youth in Transition committee (Countywide search engine) and the Neighborhood and Community committee (A Neighborhood Commission, neighborhood college, and neighborhood organizations) and the Health and Safety committee recommendation (Community Policing).

- Create a management system to oversee the entire initiative and ensure that it has the authority to make the decisions needed to be successful. This responsibility needs to be aligned to the management responsibilities of the entire plan. It is recommended that this role be assigned to a full-time employee hired to work within the newly formed Citizen Liaison Department.
- Create and support service-learning and civic engagement systems that connect youth and families to culturally appropriate opportunities which offer skills and experience, and develop connections between youth, families, community members, place and organizations.
- Identify an organization or create a county department and a school-based department to develop and provide the training needed to ensure the civic engagement/service learning systems are successful.
 - Prepare adults to work in harmony with youth
 - Educate adults to the benefits of working with youth and help them create meaningful opportunities
 - Prepare youth to handle the placements they select within the engagement system
 - Prepare youth with leadership skills
- Institute recruitment systems that insure that the rich diversity within the county and schools are solicited. Also insure that the opportunities that are developed consider the cultural and social issues of those who may want to participate.
- Celebrate the results of all the opportunities.

What is your committee's recommended timeline for implementing this recommendation?

Any youth engagement/service learning system that is starting from ground zero must realize that the process is more like a relay race in a marathon than a sprint. It will require coordination, collaboration and shifts in the ways business is currently being done for the initiative to be sustainable. *(There has been a considerable amount of work done throughout the county and at Fort Lewis College to get service learning implemented into the schools, however, this has not occurred to date. This work must not be lost.)* So, measurements and timelines of success are based more on decades than years.

However, benchmarks are realistic and should be set for the strategies identified above.

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Policies approved by municipal leaders and School Boards | • Within 2 months of approval of final CY&FMP |
| • Securing funding for operation and growth of initiative | • Ongoing but initial funding in January 2009 |
| • Formation of the youth and adult youth engagement/service learning system planning and implementation team | • Within one month of the adoption of policy |
| • Identify initiative management structure | • November 2008 |
| • Hire staff | • January 2009 |
| • Implement planning and implementation team recommendations | • January 2009 and revised continuously as needed |
| • Identify training needs and providers | • December 2008 |
| • Provide training | • Ongoing beginning in November 2009 |
| • Recruit youth | • Ongoing beginning in November 2009 |
| • Celebrate successes | • Ongoing at conclusion of each successful opportunity |

What possible costs does your committee foresee for implementing this recommendation?

As with any initiative it requires someone to oversee it that has the background and expertise to make it work. This one is no different. A recommendation has been made as part of the plan's infrastructure needs for the County to create a Citizens Liaison Department and for two other staff to be hired, one in

Durango and a shared position between Bayfield, Ignacio and the Tribe. Within the Citizen Liaison Department in the county one position would be for a Youth Development/Engagement Liaison. This individual would be an expert in youth development/engagement and service learning and would oversee the implementation of the YD and EASP Committees' recommendation. There will also need to be funds allocated to cover the operational costs associated with this position as well as the training required to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of the youth and adults participating in this initiative.

The actual work of ensuring that the full impact of this recommendation is realized will be the responsibility of the youth serving organizations and the public and private schools throughout the county. These organizations/schools needs will be less about new funding and more about them to do business in new ways. These organizations will need to explore ways to create opportunities for youth to be engaged within their organization, schools and within the community. They should be able to also increase their operating budgets through creative and collaborative grant writing.

The training costs associated with this recommendation ongoing and significant, but will be spread out over a long period of time. One of the problems with finding funding for training is that leaders often believe that if you're a youth worker you should already know how to do this work. The truth is that very few youth workers or school faculties have the skills needed to be effective youth engagement/service learning workers. This requires a whole new skill set and, therefore, a lot of training with opportunities to practice. The Health and Safety Committee's recommendation that every organization serving children, youth and families be trained in becoming a developmentally attentive organization will go a long way to address at least the initial training needed. In addition adults will need to learn how to shift their attitudes from object/recipient to viewing young people as resources. They will also need to learn how to be effective partners when working together with young people. Organizational staff will need to learn how to create opportunities that will make the most meaningful use of the "gifts" that young people bring to any effort. School faculty will need to learn the power of service learning and how to easily and effectively incorporate these principles and practices into their curriculums. Municipal and school leaders and staff and will also need to learn how to effectively involve young people in making the decisions that will make their systems better for everyone. And finally, young people will need to be trained so that they may also have the skills to participate and the confidence to be effective.

The anticipated initial costs for the YD/EASP recommendation will be:

- County's Youth Development/Engagement Coordinator (Salary and benefit package for G11 Position) \$77,832
- Start up costs (Furniture, computer, software) \$5,000
- Shared costs (1/5 of total department cost - Based on position being collocated with rest of Citizen Liaison staff - printer, FAX machine, phone system, etc.) \$5,000
- Ongoing operating costs (utilities, insurance, printing, staff development, space, etc.) \$35,000
- Training costs (depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities of the person hired as the Youth Development/Engagement Coordinator. It will required that any training needed to implement the youth engagement or the service learning initiative that staff can't provide will need to be contracted for. Fortunately there are funding sources willing to cover these costs.

The total anticipated cost for start of this initiative will be \$122,832 plus the costs for any contracted training.