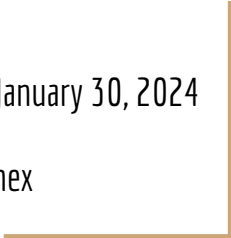


Documenting What Matters Most: Leveraging Out of School Time Experiences in College Admissions Process

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Presentation Agenda

- Problem Context
- Previous Contributions
- New Opportunities
- Research Questions
- Study Methodology and Findings
- Implications for Practice

Problem Context

- Many youth engage in learning experiences and develop unique skills outside of the formal school context
- Yet, they:
 - experience challenges in translating their OST learning experiences to college admissions personnel and industry employers
 - do not receive credentials for the acquisition of these skills
- Youths' skills are also often unrecognizable to industry professionals and college admission representatives
- Furthermore, students experience a disconnect between their school experiences and their career potential

What has been done previously?

- Digital Badging and Micro-Credentialing
- Portfolios

New Opportunities and Solutions?

- Develop a documentation learning tool that helps to capture the learning of students in OST spaces to expand pathways for college and career
- Create a credentialing mechanism that is recognized by college and industry professionals to support youths' post-secondary education and employment
- Develop a process to help youth chart their journeys toward their post-secondary futures

Research Questions

Before we can implement these new developments, we must first ask the following questions:

- What do youth and families value about learning in STEM OST settings?
- How do youths' OST learning values align or misalign with CAP priorities in the admission process?
- How can young people leverage their out of school time (OST) experiences in the college admissions process?

Study Context

- In a study with three OST providers, we asked youth, parents, OST providers, and college admissions personnel (CAP) to weigh in on the research questions
- Through two phases of semi-structured interviews, more than **35** youth, **25** OST providers, **12** parents, and 12 CAP provided insight into these questions.
- Study stakeholders represent:
 - Individuals from three midwest OST settings
 - Universities and colleagues that vary in size, selectivity, and location

Youth and Family Findings

- In the first phase of the study, youth and families were asked what they value about learning in STEM OST Context.
- 10 Learning Outcomes emerged as most salient

<i>Self-management</i>	<i>Advocacy</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>A sense of belonging</i>
<i>Perseverance</i>	<i>Problem solving</i>
<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Communication</i>
<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Critical thinking</i>

Youth and Family Findings

- To better understand these learning outcomes, we categorized them into three contexts:
 - Personal
 - Group
 - Community

Personal Contexts

One's understanding of how to manage daily responsibilities as well as work toward well-defined academic and personal goals

One's understanding of STEM specific topics, ways of approaching STEM work, and the cultivation of an identity within STEM

- Self-Management
- Problem-Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Perseverance

Perseverance

“So definitely ya know, being able to be like ‘Okay I don't really know this particular thing, but I'm going to try it anyway. And regardless of the outcome, I'm gonna do my best’ you know, so there's definitely things that she's learning that I'm seeing you know carry on to other aspects of her life.”

- Amira, A Divas Parent

Group Contexts

Contributions to achieve group-defined tasks, goals, and other responsibilities within STEM contexts or more general social activities

- Empathy
- Communication
- Leadership

Communication

“I used to be shy and cannot express myself really well. In Studio, you meet new mentors and kids every quarter, and it kind of forced myself to talk more. That really helped me to clearly express what I want to do, and plan for my future in front of strangers.”

—Max, STUDIO youth

Community Contexts

Broader significance of STEM work and the interconnected social and natural environment in which STEM is situated

- Sense of Belonging
- Advocacy
- Awareness

Sense of Belonging

“I don’t want them [youth] to memorize anything; I don’t want them to pass a test; I don’t want them to take AP tests on earth and environmental science. I want them to feel ‘I can take an intro course; I’ll be empowered to feel a little bit better about it; I can travel to some of these spaces and feel comfortable.’ [...] I want them to feel comfortable hanging out with the kids who [already] feel comfortable in these spaces.”

—Jessica, an OST provider in Wolverine Pathways

Understanding CAP Priorities

- We similarly asked CAP to weigh in on their priorities and values during phase 1 interviews
- 6 priorities emerged:
 1. STEM Interest
 2. Maximizing Opportunities
 3. Self-Directed learning
 4. Meaning Making
 5. Overcoming Adversity
 6. Commitment & Responsibility

Alignment and Misalignment?

Table 1. Youth & Family Learning Outcomes

<i>Self-management</i>	<i>Advocacy</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>A sense of belonging</i>
<i>Perseverance</i>	<i>Problem solving</i>
<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Communication</i>
<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Critical thinking</i>

Table 2. CAP Priorities

<i>STEM Interest</i>	<i>Maximizing Opportunities</i>
<i>Self-Directed Learning</i>	<i>Meaning Making</i>
<i>Overcoming Adversity</i>	<i>Commitment & Responsibility</i>

Design Tensions

- Larger goal of the project is to develop a documentation tool to help youth capture their learning in OST spaces
- While there is alignment between what youth and CAP stakeholders value, it is still difficult to create a universal tool that captures:
 - the unique nuances of OST contexts
 - the shared values of OST stakeholders (families, youth, and providers)
 - learning in a way that is tangible, understandable, and functional for college admissions officers
 - the priorities of CAP

Discussion Points

- How can young people leverage their out of school time (OST) experiences in the college admissions process?
(Beyond essays, resumes, portfolio examples)
- When considering a design tool, do we want one that fits *within* the current college admissions paradigm, or do we want to *transform, evolve,* or *disrupt* the current paradigm?

Feedback

- Are these ideas resonating with you and your youth-serving context?
- Where are the gaps?
- Other ideas that were not previously considered?