

HEALTHY CAN BE TASTY: A PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION WITH STUDENT ADVOCATES

DEMANDING CHANGE IN THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA

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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS CAN BE EFFECTIVE EVALUATORS OF THEIR SCHOOL.

Introduction

- Youth opinion and involvement are seldom incorporated into programs directly affecting them.
- Participatory evaluations, in which stakeholder groups and evaluators share control of the evaluation process, can help give voice to those typically marginalized in decision-making (Brunner & Guzman, 1989).

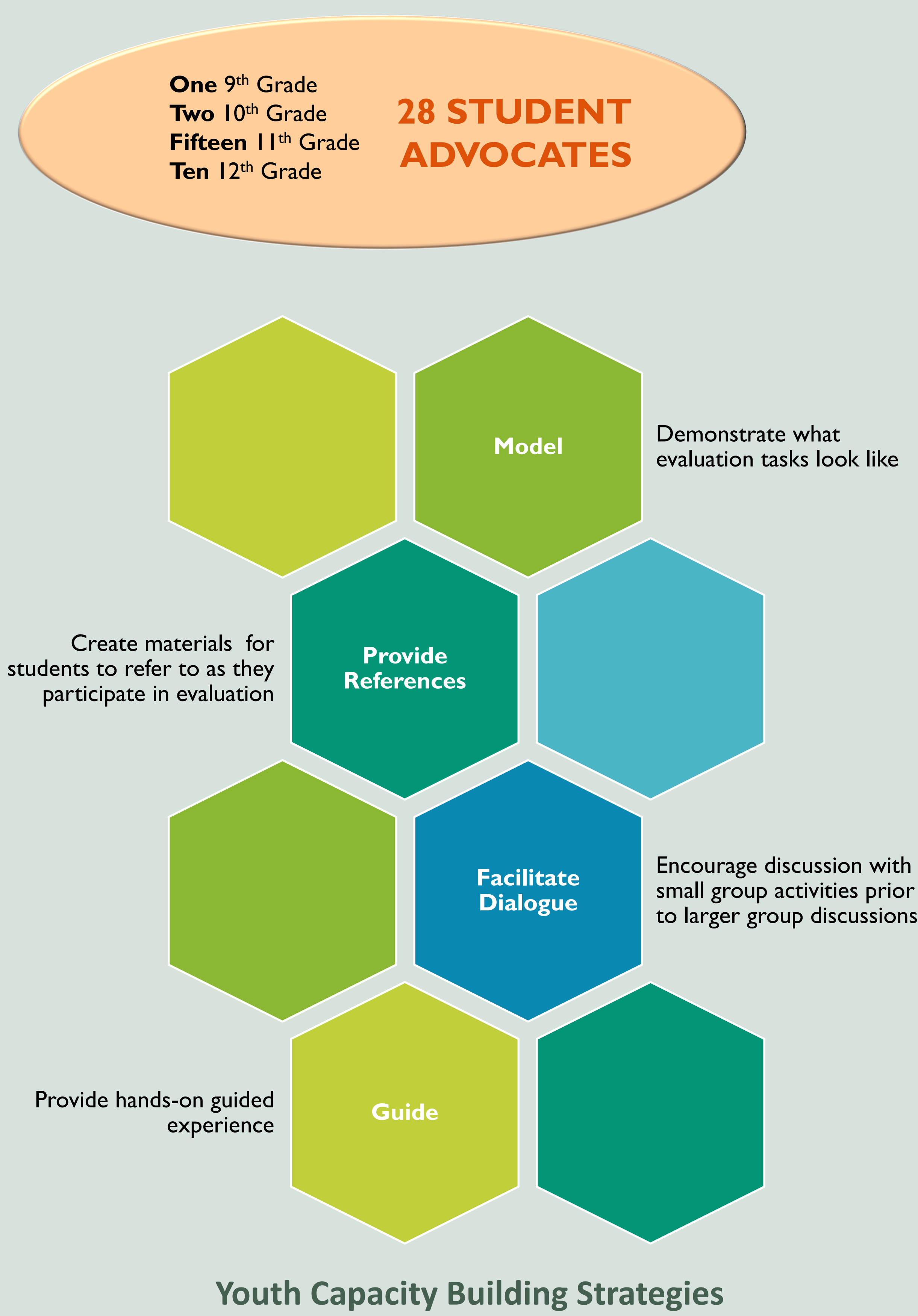
Background

- Students in an urban East Los Angeles high school expressed concern about cafeteria food quality and healthiness.
- Volunteers of America, Greater Los Angeles (VOALA) established a student advocacy group geared towards making change in high school cafeteria food policies.
- VOALA's Evaluation Department collaborated with the student advocacy group to develop a mixed-method research strategy.
- Evaluators guided and encouraged students to generate their own tools to assess the opinions of their peers and increase interest in the movement to improve cafeteria food.

Students Proved the Food Needed to Improve



Effective Strategies



We helped the students develop their Evaluation utilizing the effective youth capacity building strategies.

Our Collaborative Process

Evaluation Team	Student Advocates
Determine Problem <ul style="list-style-type: none">Explained purpose and process of focus groupsConducted/modeled five student focus groups (n=8-12) and one parent focus group (n=9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gained focus group experience as participantsFour student advocates co-facilitated focus group with peers
Gather Information <ul style="list-style-type: none">Guided survey developmentAdvised on survey administration procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Created questions for a 10-item survey exploring school food issuesCreated data collection protocol and piloted surveyDistributed survey to 269 peers
Process and Synthesize Data <ul style="list-style-type: none">Entered and analyzed survey dataTranscribed and coded focus group dataFacilitated interpretation of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Interpreted survey and focus group resultsGenerated recommendations based on findings
Dissemination <ul style="list-style-type: none">Created formal reporting materials targeted towards school administrationTrained students on formal presentation of findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Presented findings to school board and administrationPrepared a short written report for dissemination to peers and community

Students took the data to District Officials to make school and districtwide changes!

Students' Recommendations to District Officials

- ✓ Monitor food preparation and maintain kitchen facilities
- ✓ Don't serve processed food
- ✓ Make sure food and milk are not spoiled or frozen
- ✓ Provide water as a beverage option in addition to milk
- ✓ Add multiple options during lunch (i.e., vegetarian food)
- ✓ Buy food and produce from local or farmer's markets
- ✓ Have menu and nutrition facts readily available and visible
- ✓ Incorporate a food satisfaction survey into the school report card

What now?

- Students are monitoring cafeteria facility improvements
- Monthly meetings between district officials and students
- Students will be surveying other schools

Conclusions

- Students **EMPOWERED** with knowledge and tools = Meaningful **IMPACT**
- Students are important **CONTRIBUTORS** to positive school **CHANGE**
- School officials **LISTEN** when students are backed with **DATA**



This project was supported by funding from the California Endowment.

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