

YES We Can!

The quarterly newsletter from Youth Empowerment School

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SCHOOL

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www.youthempowermentschool.wordpress.com

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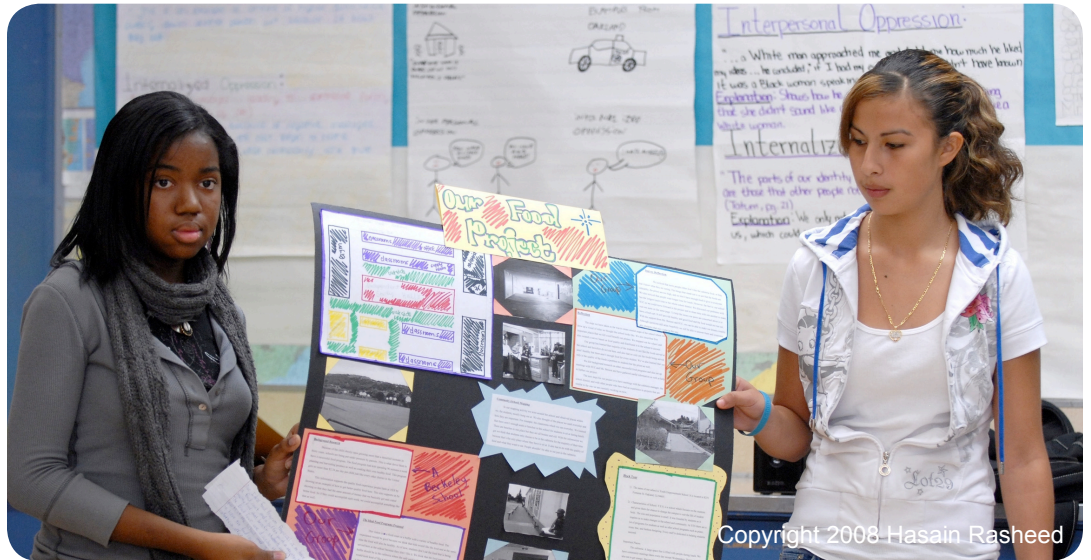
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Urban Design Class: Understanding Oakland

Youth Empowerment School's **Public Service Academy** got even stronger this year with the addition of an Urban Design class. We study the vision and practical decisions behind some of Oakland's defining buildings and areas, while also taking a hard look at some complex questions: Why are there so many liquor stores in Oakland? Why do some buildings sit empty and abandoned for years? Why isn't there a grocery store or park near my house?

As with all the Public Service Academy's classes, Urban Design aims to get kids out in the community connecting with actual city planners, engineers, and organizers. For their final project, students will create their own designs and present them to Oakland's real decision-makers! As teacher Tim Bremner puts it in the course description, "Your voice is necessary to create the Oakland you want. Now is your opportunity!"



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In Their Own Words:
11th-grader Aggie,
Urban Design Project Lead

Urban Design is a class that tries to help change the community into a better place by designing thoughtful urban spaces. We try to focus on things that are important to us, and we work towards trying to design a space not only for the benefit of our class, but for the benefit of everyone. A project we are currently working on is the quality of food that we receive in school. The majority of the students that attend Youth Empowerment School feel that the foods we get are not only unhealthy, but repetitive and insufficient. Therefore, we students in Urban Design are trying to work towards helping the students become healthier and happier.

Support YES!

Like other public high schools, Youth Empowerment School must raise money from individuals to cover basic classroom materials, keep ever-changing technology up to date, and continue offering real-world learning through field trips and college visits. We'd love, for example, to take our Urban Design kids to Sacramento to see how the state capital was laid out. But funds for transportation and other field-trip costs fall outside our already tight budget.

You can help us continue to offer the hands-on learning our Public Service Academy students need by making a tax-deductible donation. Visit www.smallschoolsfoundation.org, click "Donate Now," and chose "Youth Empowerment School" in the Designation pull-down, or send a check to "OSSF/YES," P.O. Box 20238, Oakland, CA 94620. Thank you for your support!

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YES Students Catch a "Life-Changing" Global Glimpse

In another example of Youth Empowerment School's dedication to real-world learning, we have partnered with **Global Glimpse**, a program that "expands the global perspective of tomorrow's leaders" by arranging three-week journeys abroad for high school juniors every summer. For a glimpse into the incredible opportunities these trips have given YES students, we leave it to our "foreign correspondent," **12th-grader Chloe**.

During my three-week trip to Nicaragua (the LARGEST country in Central America), I experienced life-changing events. Whether it was visiting and playing with children in the local orphanage, sand-gliding down Cerro Negro (Black Volcano), or teaching English to students at the University of Leon, everything was breathtaking.

On the first day, as I stepped off the plane in Nicaragua's capital with 25 fellow students, I felt change. It was 120 degrees and we immediately boarded big, loud school busses to tour the city.

"We had a great time with the students from YES and feel very fortunate to have them on our trips," says Global Glimpse President Abbas Hasan. "Watching the YES students in action compared to many of the other students we work with, I can tell the amazing impact you are having on your students."

Our first stop was the U.S embassy. After passing through security, we chatted for a couple hours with embassy workers. We then headed to our new home for the next three weeks, a hostel called "La Tortuga Booluda" (The Lazy Turtle). The Tortuga had big rooms, a fully supplied snack bar, a neat clothesline and a nice skylight; there

was NO roof. Throughout the next three weeks we endured crazy weather. In poor countries such as Nicaragua, they don't have stable draining systems. So when it rained, it poured! It was so bad, that crossing the street became a problem because the water rose above my knees!

During the three weeks we visited all the cathedrals in our neighborhood, hung out at beaches, milked cows, celebrated birthdays, shopped, prepared for senior year and college, and much more. The trip lived up to its promise: It made me a stronger leader. I have been telling more high school students that studying and traveling abroad is a beautiful thing -- it's life-changing. I plan to do this in college for sure!



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Community Breakfast Celebrates Youth Center

In last December's YES We Can! newsletter, we covered the "comprehensive community center" we hoped to develop on campus. That space – **our Youth Center** – is now open and flourishing, as community members discovered during this fall's Community Breakfast. The event featured a tour of our **Student Unity Council (SUC)** room and our Youth Center.

YES students, including 11th-grader Eric, spoke with YES supporters about the impact of these spaces. "Through SUC and the Youth Center, we give students a safe space to be part of the community, not just the school," he said. "Having our own space makes other goals more tangible." The students shared just a few of these realized goals, including bringing mental health services to campus through a grant they wrote, and sending 30 kids on a southern California college tour over last spring break (also thanks to a student-written grant).