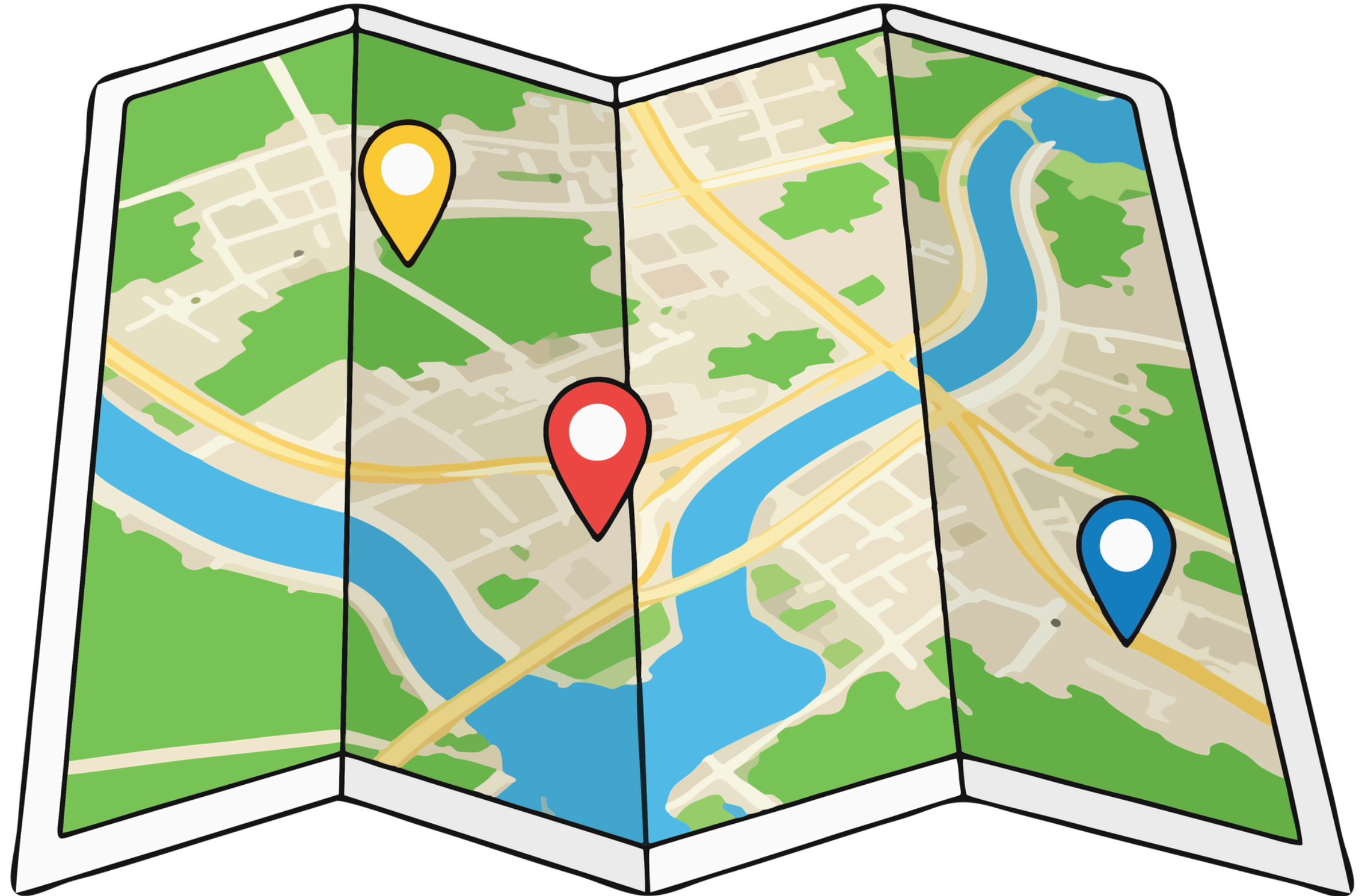




An Ecosystem of Existing Safety & Belonging Efforts in Alexandria





What Are We Learning Across the Entire Safety & Belonging Ecosystem?

Strengths



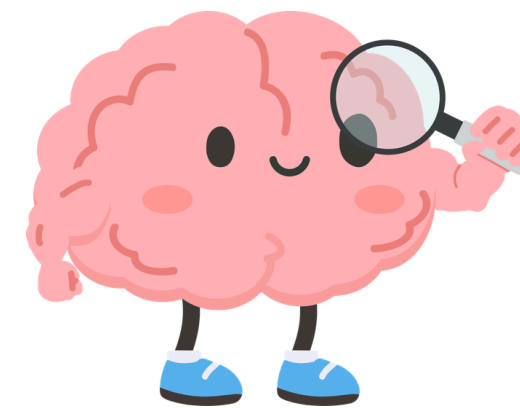
- Alexandria has extensive youth-serving infrastructure
- Strong partnerships and leadership structures exist
- Many youth-led opportunities already exist
- Multiple initiatives are already working toward similar goals

Challenges



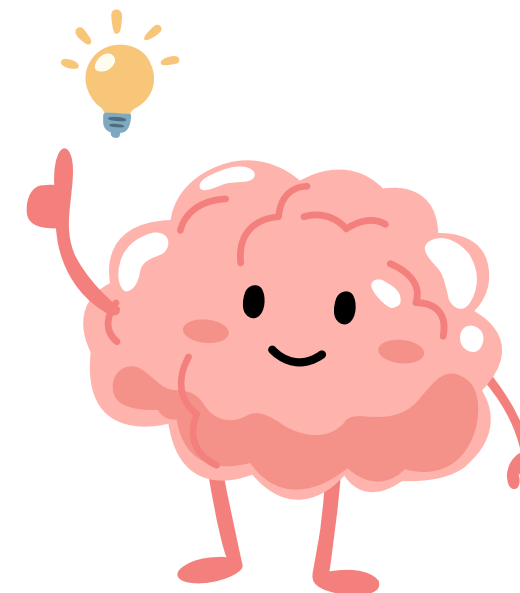
- Youth and families still experience the system as fragmented
- Navigation depends heavily on trusted adults and informal relationships
- Awareness and transportation barriers limit participation
- Access is uneven across schools, neighborhoods, and populations

Cross-Cutting Themes



- Trusted adults matter
- Coordination matters as much as creating new programs
- Many opportunities involve connecting existing efforts rather than creating new ones

Emerging Opportunity



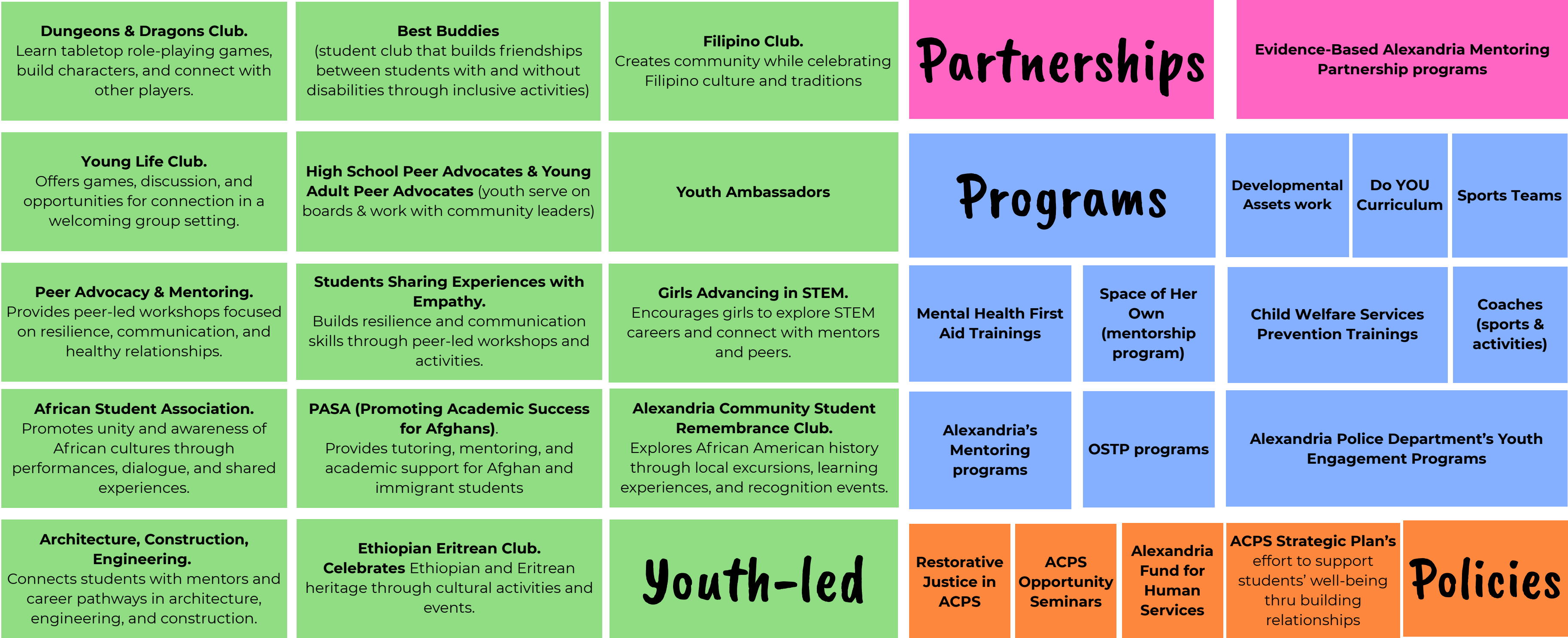
- Move from isolated programs to connected pathways.



Mapping our efforts to Strengthen Relationships

Strengthening Relationships

The efforts that build safe, supportive relationships and environments where young people feel known, supported, and respected by adults and peers.



Identify Alignment, Gaps, Fragmentation, & Opportunities

You are not expected to sort every effort on the board. Instead, focus on patterns. Which areas already have strong infrastructure? Where do you see gaps? Where are efforts happening separately that could work better together? The goal is to understand how the system functions, not to categorize every program.

WHERE WE ALREADY HAVE MOMENTUM & CAPACITY



Look for Alignment

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where are we already doing a lot of work that's connected enough to function as a system/supported by strong infrastructure?

Which of these efforts are already working on the same outcome?

Think about where we already have:

- multiple programs serving a similar purpose/goals
- strong partnerships in place
- existing infrastructure we could build on quickly
- schools, City agencies, and community partners working in the same direction
- multiple ways youth can access support
- efforts happening consistently across multiple grade levels or neighborhoods
- momentum or leadership ownership
- shared referral pathways

Multiple youth-led efforts with a strong partnerships in place:

- Link Club
- Youth Ambassadors
- High School Peer Advocates and Young Adult Peer Advocates who serve on boards and commissions

Chelsea Eickert

Young adult peer advocate program relationship with Juvenile Detention Center

Peer Advocate Student Account

Restorative Justice in ACPS is a district-wide initiative but unevenly or inconsistently implemented

Alexandria Fund for Human Services supports alignment by funding programs that align with the CYCP

CaringU is establishing strong partnerships and building on community knowledge to equip caring adults with tools, knowledge, and confidence to support young people in their lives

Chelsea Eickert

Multiple programs and partnerships in place with a similar goal of connecting youth to caring adults:

- Alexandria's mentoring programs
- evidence-based alexandria mentoring partnership programs
- space of her own mentoring program
- in planning stage of starting new mentoring programs at/with rec centers

Ch

Do YOU Curriculum prevents youth violence by promoting healthy relationships & is delivered by youth to youth

ALX Beyond offers Flourish Lab SEL workshops to all OST providers (chosen through collaboration between City, ACPS, nonprofits, businesses, and faith-based orgs)

ALX Beyond offers Weikart YPQI to all OST providers (common definition/understanding for high-quality programming)

Youth Ambassadors also get trained in Developmental Assets and use them to inform the work they do

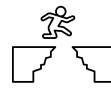
AMP Youth Survey measuring 5 Dev Assets

Madeline Nance

ACPS Opportunity Seminars brings partners together

Developmental Assets work is embedded into professional development opportunities for youth development staff across the city - common training/standards for all staff, volunteers, & caring adults who support youth

WHERE YOUTH NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET



Look for Gaps

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where would we expect to see more support than currently exists?

Where do opportunities or support exist but youth still can't access them easily?

For example, think about:

- barriers (transportation, financial, stigma, cultural, structural, physical, geographical, language, etc.)
- awareness/navigation
- culturally responsive providers
- youth who may be disconnected from opportunities and caring adults
- racial & social disparities
- weekend/evening coverage
- access across schools and neighborhoods
- supports by grade-level
- geographic locations/hotspots without support
- lack of coordination across agencies
- youth voice not connected to decisions
- lack of transparency about decisions

Are any of these things making it harder for youth to participate in the efforts we identified on the left?

Possible issue with student club consistency from year-to-year. Need to understand how clubs are advised and maintained in order for this initiative to collaborate/support

Amanda

Not all youth are aware or want to participate. How can we encourage greater participation?

Question: Are the Academies helping connect students to relevant clubs and OSTP?

Youth report feeling like they don't have anyone at school that they feel comfortable talking to so they stay silent about their mental health needs

Question: Are students supported in finding similar clubs that exist at the high school that they were connected to in Middle School? Is there a bridge to help students navigate clubs?

Students have expressed wanting a peer-mentoring program where older students mentor younger students - does that exist? Are there any obvious opportunities to foster a connection?

Chelsea Eickert

Many great mentoring programs exist but informal adult presence in public youth spaces does not

11% of Latino youth report having 3 or more caring adults in their life

Chelsea Eickert

Participation in OSTP is difficult when programs are offered at the same time. Forces youth to choose because they can't do both at the same time.

Some youth need to be home to provide childcare for younger siblings so they are unable to attend events/programs

Madeline Nance

WHERE COORDINATION IS MISSING & WOULD INCREASE IMPACT



Look for Fragmentation

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, which efforts are happening but not coordinated (youth have to navigate between them alone)?

Where are similar efforts happening separately that could work better together?

Where could coordination (*not new programs*) make the biggest difference?

Think about where there might be:

- programs working toward similar goals but not connected to each other
- youth or families having to navigate multiple systems to get help
- partners doing related work without talking to each other
- informal referrals instead of structured referrals
- efforts happening in isolation rather than as part of a network
- duplication without intentional alignment
- a reliance on individual relationships instead of coordinated systems
- areas where coordination would make participation easier for youth

Programs that are possibly working towards the same goal but maybe not connected to each other/the greater OSTP Landscape

- Alexandria Police Department's Youth Engagement Programs
- Coaches & Sports Teams
- Middle School + High School Clubs

Chelsea Eickert

ACPS partnerships office's provision of school connections w/ community partners – I see that there are some schools that have more supportive programs and initiatives than others that often comes down to the school's capacity to manage the initiative

Amanda

Student Clubs not counted as part of the OSTP landscape

Are Grandma's Table - a mentoring group for high school girls focused on educating them about local government and how to get involved in causes they care about - and Youth in Progress (YIP) - a mentoring group once a week which targets at-risk boys, connected to the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership?

No, I also believe APD has a mentoring program and we aren't connected either -Maddie

Does the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership struggle with receiving referrals from ACPS of children who they have identified as in need of a mentor?

Yes, it varies based on the school but overall yes -Maddie

WHERE WE COULD ACT WITHIN ONE YEAR



Look for Opportunities

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where could coordination increase impact quickly?

Think about where could:

- small adjustments make existing programs easier to access?
- shared outreach improve participation?
- partners align schedules, locations, or transportation?
- youth voice already present be connected to decision-making?
- trusted adults already working with youth extend their reach?
- we pilot something small with visible results within a year?
- one organization support another without creating a new program?

Let's find a way to connect these programs to the greater OSTP Landscape (i.e. invite them to YSCC, connect them with ALX Beyond WGs, Connecting Youth Initiative, Youth Resource Directory, etc)

- Alexandria Police Department's Youth Engagement Programs
- Coaches & Sports Teams
- Middle School + High School Clubs

Chelsea Eickert

Youth-serving providers having knowledge about programs/partnerships/etc., can strengthen being able to share information/refer youth

Peer Advocate Student Account

ACPS Strategic Plan: Strengthen integrated systems of support for students' social and emotional well-being through building positive relationships with peers and trusted adults.

Recommendation for the City School Staff Group: Create an formal referral pathway from ACPS to AMP when a child is in need of a mentor

Chelsea Eickert

Find ways of connecting systems-involved youth (i.e. kids in foster care/child welfare system, court services, behavioral health services, etc.) and their families to all these supportive adults, programs, and spaces

Chelsea Eickert

Campagna Center's Building Better Futures program is currently partnering/sponsoring 3 after school clubs (Titan Robotics, Titan Theatre, JROTC)

This has supported in funding for afterschool enrichment across the clubs. In addition to sponsoring enrichment activities, students participate in weekly post-secondary planning classes, college essay support, job readiness skills discussions, college/t

Can CaringU help with this? Can the entire YSCC take CaringU's course on navigating resources? Or help build the course together??

Peer Advocate Student Account

Are any partners working with ACPS on this? Could this be an opportunity to embed developmental assets into ACPS's professional development (if not already)?

Recommendation for Chelsea: Connect Grandma's Table, YIP, and APD's mentoring program to the AMP/Maddie

Chelsea Eickert

Recommendation for the City School Staff Group: Coordinate equity, trauma-informed, and relationship-based practices (Developmental Assets, ALX Beyond's SEL programming, CaringU's courses, the Do YOU Curriculum, etc.) across systems

Repeatedly sharing the ALX Beyond Program Locator through a community-wide communications plan (involving multiple communications channels with broad outreach)

Idea: Work with YIP to connect more Latino boys to more caring adults at school who can talk to them about their mental health. Visit all student clubs = outreach

Chelsea Eickert

Analysis of our board: Strengthening Relationships

The efforts that build safe, supportive relationships and environments where young people feel known, supported, and respected by adults and peers.

Our Community's Strengths:

- Alexandria already has a strong foundation for peer connection and youth leadership
- multiple systems already recognize relationships as protective factors.
- Alexandria has MANY adult champions

Fragmentation:

- Relationship-building appears to be happening in silos
- Youth have to navigate systems on their own and appear to need insider knowledge, adult connectors, transportation, social confidence, peer invitation to access opportunities. That means the ecosystem may work well for already-connected youth more than disconnected youth.
- Relationships depend too much on individual adults so we need better infrastructure

Gaps:

- Relationship access is uneven and are not yet systemically guaranteed
- Alexandria has youth engagement structures but youth may still not consistently shape systems decisions.
- Program participation may be a struggle if they don't intentionally tie together identity, culture, and belonging (just look at the student clubs). Belonging appears deeply tied to representation, cultural affirmation, peer identity, and psychologically safe spaces

Strategic Opportunities:

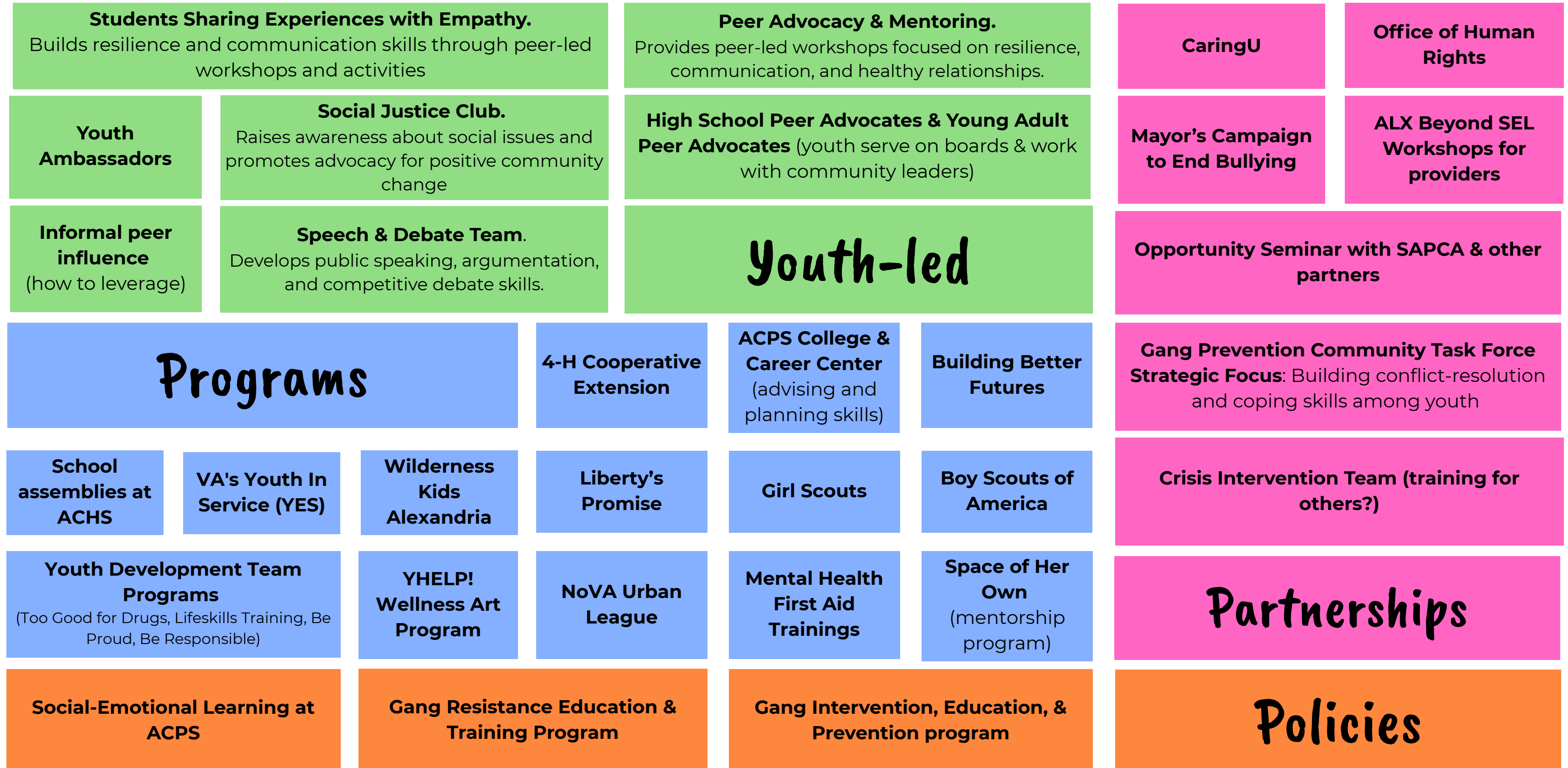
- Build a coordinated youth relationship pathway where youth are intentionally connected from one support to another, trusted adults cross-refer, leadership pathways build over time, disconnected youth and systems-involved youth are intentionally identified and connected.
- Focus on "Belonging Infrastructure" that includes identity-safe spaces, peer belonging, trusted adults, social connection, places to gather, opportunities to contribute, leadership ownership.
- Create stronger transition/connector systems. For example, youth in clubs can be connected to mentoring, youth in mentoring can be connected to employment/WDC, youth in sports can be informed of mental health supports, youth engaged in school supports can be connected to OST opportunities or mentoring, youth in affinity groups can be connected to civic leadership or other leadership opportunities, etc.
- Connect trusted adults (i.e. coaches, mentors, OSTP staff, youth leaders, etc.) to CaringU



Mapping our efforts to Strengthen Skills

Strengthening Skills

Our efforts to ensure that young people have tools to manage conflict, stress, and social pressure.



Identify Alignment, Gaps, Fragmentation, & Opportunities

You are not expected to sort every effort on the board. Instead, focus on patterns. Which areas already have strong infrastructure? Where do you see gaps? Where are efforts happening separately that could work better together? The goal is to understand how the system functions, not to categorize every program

WHERE WE ALREADY HAVE MOMENTUM & CAPACITY



Look for Alignment

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Think about where we already have:

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- multiple ways youth can access support
- efforts happening consistently across multiple grade levels or neighborhoods
- momentum or leadership ownership
- shared referral pathways

ACPS's efforts to integrate and standardize understanding of and use of restorative practices and RULER

Amanda

ALX Beyond offers Flourish Lab SEL workshops to all OST providers (chosen through collaboration between City, ACPS, nonprofits, businesses, and faith-based orgs)

Alexandria Mentoring Partnership programs through structured life skills lessons (varies by program) and/or mentor relationship

Madeline Nance

ALX Beyond offers Weikart YPQI to all OST providers (unified practices to support OST programs in their work with youth)

CaringU trainings to better equip adults with the skills and confidence to help youth strengthen their skills

Madeline Nance

The **Gang Prevention Community Task Force** AND the **Youth Services Coordinating Council** has chosen this strategy to guide their work

Chelsea Eickert

Youth Ambassadors have taught life skill lessons at AMP programs

Madeline Nance

WHERE YOUTH NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET



Look for Gaps

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where would we expect to see more support than currently exists? Where do opportunities or support exist but youth still can't access them easily?

For example, think about:

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- weekend/evening coverage
- access across schools and neighborhoods
- supports by grade-level
- geographic locations/hotspots without support
- lack of coordination across agencies
- youth voice not connected to decisions
- lack of transparency about decisions

Are any of these things making it harder for youth to participate in the efforts we identified on the left?

limited structured supervision after school dismissal

Youth report having limited skills in conflict resolution and emotional regulation, and say that many conflicts start on social media - Do any of the efforts that we have identified in the map help prevent youth from engaging in social-media-driven conflict escalation?

Chelsea Eickert

If, say, a young person was identified by a caring adult in their life as needing to build skills in conflict resolution, where could the caring adult go to find help?

Chelsea Eickert

Need engaging opportunities to learn these skills in a setting and manner that doesn't feel like school

Madeline Nance

WHERE COORDINATION IS MISSING & WOULD INCREASE IMPACT



Look for Fragmentation

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where are efforts happening but not coordinated (youth have to navigate between them alone)? Where are similar efforts happening separately that could work better together? Where could coordination (*not new programs*) make the biggest difference?

Think about where there might be:

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- areas where coordination would make participation easier for youth

ACPS partnerships office's provision of school connections w/ community partners – I see that there are some schools that have more supportive programs and initiatives than others that often comes down to the school's capacity to manage the initiative

Amanda

Other side of the coin - ACPS is working to integrate Restorative Practices and RULER in a uniform way across schools but uptake can really vary from school to school

Amanda

To follow up on Amanda's...in addition to variation between schools, programs outside of school are often not trained or informed on same practices to keep consistent environment/practices, or the training may not match what students they work with experience at school given the variation between schools (trainings often come from district-level)

Madeline Nance

Looks like many skills programs exist but conflicts still escalate

Chelsea Eickert

WHERE WE COULD ACT WITHIN ONE YEAR



Look for Opportunities

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where could coordination increase impact quickly?

Think about where could:

- small adjustments make existing programs easier to access?
- shared outreach improve participation?
- partners align schedules, locations, or transportation?
- youth voice already present be connected to decision-making?
- trusted adults already working with youth extend their reach?
- we pilot something small with visible results within a year?
- one organization support another without creating a new program?

Can the Youth Ambassadors offer to bring life skill lessons to the student clubs at MS/HS?

Chelsea Eickert

Identify hotspots where students gather afterschool and locate trusted adults there to conduct outreach

Chelsea Eickert

Connect trusted adults everywhere to CaringU

Chelsea Eickert

To strengthen other similar efforts, like the **Gang Prevention Community Task Force** and the **YSCC**: Share this resource map with other groups focused on building coping skills among youth

Chelsea Eickert

To strengthen other similar efforts (i.e. **OSTP, GPCTF, YSCC, the CWS Strategic Plan**): Share restorative justice, RULER, positive behavior interventions, & trauma-informed practices; coordinate culturally responsive training; elevate youth/family voice in prevention efforts

Chelsea Eickert

Analysis of our Board: Strengthening Skills

Our efforts to ensure that young people have tools to manage conflict, stress, and social pressure.

Our Community's Strengths:

- Strong skill-building infrastructure exists across multiple systems and is focused on: SEL, peer leadership, conflict resolution, resilience, communication, mentoring, prevention education, emotional regulation, leadership development.
- Alexandria already has strong peer to peer prevention infrastructure.
- Our community understands the connection between emotional regulation, trauma, conflict, violence prevention

Fragmentation:

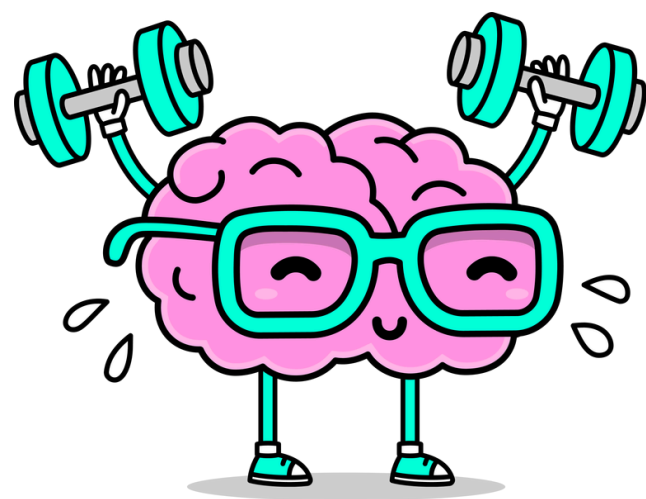
- Similar skills are being taught across systems without a shared framework or language
- Implementation may vary significantly between schools, programs, and adults
- Skill-building efforts often rely on individual staff capacity rather than coordinated systems
- Youth may experience disconnected prevention efforts rather than a continuous developmental pathway

Gaps:

- one-time trainings, uneven implementation across settings, and lack of continuity around skill-building => youth are not experiencing skill-building through a consistent developmental pathway
- skill-building opportunities may disproportionately reach already-connected youth, leaving youth most in need of support least connected
- Since conflict escalation is happening faster than our systems can respond, our ecosystem seems to need a coordinated strategy focused on preventing digital/online conflict
- adults across systems may not be reinforcing the same prevention skills

Strategic Opportunities:

- Create a skill-building framework that's shared across schools, ostp, peer programs, youth employment, mentoring, etc. that reinforces emotional regulation, communication, conflict navigation, digital citizenship, peer accountability, resilience, and using shared concepts/language (i.e. reinforce what ACPS is doing in community-based settings)
- Expand peer-led prevention models
- Develop stronger responses to digital conflict and online escalation



Mapping our efforts to Promote Mental Health

Promoting Mental Health

Our efforts to ensure that all young people have access to mental health support

Random Acts of Kindness Club. Encourages service projects that promote kindness throughout the school community.	Alexandria Ploggers. Picking up litter + jogging club to clean up our community while releasing endorphins	Filipino Club. Creates community while celebrating Filipino culture and traditions	Programs		Child & Family Behavioral Health Services
MH Poetry Club. Provides a creative space for poetry, spoken word, and student literary events	Heart of Asia. Celebrates Afghan culture and supports International Academy students through tutoring and events.	Students Sharing Experiences with Empathy. Builds resilience and communication skills through peer-led workshops and activities.	Circles of Hope (Judith Wheeler)	Same Day Access @DCHS	Trainings in ACEs, Trauma-Informed practices, YMFA, & QPR
Garden Club. Maintains a community garden and donates produce to local food banks.	Asian & Pacific Islander Student Union. Promotes community and connection through activities celebrating Asian and Pacific Islander cultures.	Skate Club. Connects students who enjoy skateboarding through meetups and shared practice.	Multicultural Center (Dr. Corbett)	School Social Workers	Faith-based Counseling (e.g. Shiloh Baptist Church?)
Rising Clubs. Supports confidence, leadership, and academic success for young women.	MSA (Muslim Student Association). Provides a space for faith connection, dialogue, and community service.	Peer Advocacy & Mentoring. Provides peer-led workshops focused on resilience, communication, and healthy relationships.	YHELP! Wellness Art Program	Court Service Unit	Sexual Assault Center & Domestic Violence Program therapy & Support Groups
Morgan’s Message. Promotes student-athlete mental health awareness and advocacy	African Student Association. Promotes unity and awareness of African cultures through performances, dialogue, and shared experiences.	Animals Club. Connects students with volunteering opportunities and activities supporting animals in need.	Shelter Care	TRAILS	Mental Health Literacy
Yellow MINDS. Promotes mental health awareness and supportive conversations among students	Pride Club. Creates a welcoming space for LGBTQIA+ students and allies.	National Spanish Honor Society. Celebrates excellence in Spanish language and culture.	Communities in Schools coordination with students, schools, and families		Multi-Disciplinary Team (Center for Alexandria’s Children, Police, SAC, DVP, DCHS, etc.)
Ethiopian Eritrean Club. Celebrates Ethiopian and Eritrean heritage through cultural activities and events.	Black Student Union. Builds community and cultural connection for students of the African diaspora and allies	Youth-led	Partnerships		CHIP Mental Wellness Coalition

Hazel Health	Alexandria Fund for Human Services	School-Based Therapy	Court Service Unit's Therapeutic Supports	ACPS Strategic Plan: Establish and uphold clear behavior expectations while supporting each student's unique academic and social-emotional needs.	ACPS Strategic Plan: Strengthen integrated systems of support for students' social and emotional well-being through building positive relationships with peers and trusted adults.	Mental Health for uninsured students (many students un/under-informed & possible capacity issue)	Policies
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Identify Alignment, Gaps, Fragmentation, & Opportunities

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ACPS
partnership with
Hazel Health
mental health
services

Amanda

RAISE, Alexandria's Trauma-Informed Community Network, has built the infrastructure that has brought community partners from across sectors together to work in the same direction to make Alexandria more trauma-informed

Chelsea Eickert

CHIP Mental Wellness Coalition is bringing partners and community members together from across sections to form work groups to focus on on five different areas - one is to "create safer spaces for vulnerable communities." The four other focus areas include:

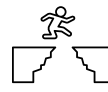
1. Strengthen community connections, support systems, and belonging
2. Reduce access barriers for services and care (cost, availability)
3. Expand early intervention and screening for child and youth mental health
4. Improve crisis and serious mental illness services

Chelsea Eickert

Students report difficulty making appointments, concerns about privacy, and a lack of consistent relationships with school-based mental health staff (Youth Needs Assessment)

Chelsea Eickert

WHERE YOUTH NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET



Look for Gaps

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- youth voice not connected to decisions
- lack of transparency about decisions

Are any of these things making it harder for youth to participate in the efforts we identified on the left?

Barriers identified by a student's Civic Action Project: "Many students stay quiet because they **feel embarrassed, think adults will not take them seriously, or believe no one will understand them**...students often **do not feel comfortable seeking help**, which highlights a strong need for better support systems in schools...many students reported that they **do not feel comfortable talking to someone at school...feel misunderstood, schools should also work on reducing the stigma around mental health** through awareness programs and open conversations...more advisory periods or structured time where students can talk about stress and academic pressure could help students feel more supported."

Chelsea Eickert

Mental health is a growing concern, particularly for girls, LGBTQIA+ youth, and students of color

Chelsea Eickert

The staff who are in positions of supporting youth may also have unmet mental health needs, unaddressed trauma, experiencing burnout, and lack of support from their employer who are telling them to "do more with less"

Chelsea Eickert

Students are unaware of and do not know how to access the mental health supports that exist in their schools and communities. Youth shared that mental health support, while present in some schools, is often insufficient or hard to access (Youth Needs Assessment)

Chelsea Eickert

Youth and families have had challenges getting to Mark Center & difficulty understanding what is needed and/or concerned about lack of "appropriate" paperwork

Madeline Nance

"School doesn't know how to help students who are in crisis."/ "Counselors are hard to meet with." / "Counselors are not helpful." / "Counselor making it seem like we are stupid." Youth Needs Assessment

Chelsea Eickert

"Teachers should undergo training on how to assist students dealing with anxiety, depression, and social harassment to create a safer environment for everyone." -ACPS Student

Chelsea Eickert

The Shape of Youth Mental Health report (2023) found that nearly half of local students feel persistently sad or hopeless, driven by stress, lack of sleep, and digital overload. A student-led survey of their peers in 2026 found the same results.

Eickert

RAISE does not have a coordinator to convene the network

Chelsea Eickert

WHERE COORDINATION IS MISSING & WOULD INCREASE IMPACT



Look for Fragmentation

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- duplication without intentional alignment
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- areas where coordination would make participation easier for youth

The ACPS Strategic Plan is focused on supporting students' social-emotional needs but it's unclear how the CYCP or CHIP or other work groups/coalitions working on similar goals can support them in this work

Chelsea Eickert

Communities in Schools is not connected to the Children & Youth Community Plan work (maybe not connected to DCHS at all?)

Chelsea Eickert

Children & Youth Community Plan does not have strong connections with the faith-based community

Chelsea Eickert

When a student or family receives a referral for mental health services, are they provided with support in navigating next steps and getting connected with the right providers?

Chelsea Eickert

ACPS partnerships office's provision of school connections w/ community partners - I see that there are some schools that have more supportive programs and initiatives than others that often comes down to the school's capacity to manage the initiative

Amanda

Children & Youth Community Plan would benefit from a stronger connection to the Student Support Services Team in ACPS

Chelsea Eickert

Are community program staff aware of the support in schools to help guide youth who share this concern outside of school setting?

Madeline Nance

WHERE WE COULD ACT WITHIN ONE YEAR



Look for Opportunities

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where could coordination increase impact quickly?

Think about where could:

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- youth voice already present be connected to decision-making?
- trusted adults already working with youth extend their reach?
- we pilot something small with visible results within a year?
- one organization support another without creating a new program?

The CHIP has identified Mental Health as one of their priorities - opportunity to elevate youth/family experiences; strengthen trauma-informed and culturally responsive supports

Chelsea Eickert

Deliver Youth Mental Health First Aid to all ACPS Teachers & Staff

Chelsea Eickert

How can we help inform every student of Hazel Health?

Chelsea Eickert

Inform youth program providers of the mental health supports available to students (and to them) and how to make the connection

Share the Youth Needs Assessment findings and findings from other local assessments about youth mental health with the youth mental health provider community

Work on connecting the CYCP/DCHS to Communities in Schools, the faith-based community, and strengthening relationship with SST in ACPS

Find ways of connecting systems-involved youth (i.e. kids in foster care/child welfare system, court services, behavioral health services, etc.) and their families to all these mental health supports, clubs, and resources

Chelsea Eickert

Analysis of our Board: Promoting Mental Health

Our efforts to ensure that all young people have access to mental health support

Our Community's Strengths:

- Strong trauma-informed foundation across multiple systems
- Extensive school-based mental health infrastructure
- Existing coalitions and partnerships focused on youth wellness
- Many diverse youth-led and identity-based spaces that promote belonging and emotional support
- Growing recognition of the importance of prevention and early intervention

Fragmentation:

- Referral and navigation systems may rely heavily on individual relationships rather than structured coordination
- School and community-based supports may be struggling to function as a connected ecosystem
- Families may experience the system as confusing or difficult to access

Gaps:

- Many youth and families struggle to navigate available supports, including school- and community-based mental health services
- Preventative emotional support may be less accessible than crisis response
- Youth disconnected from school may also become disconnected from support systems
- Stigma, language barriers, transportation, and cultural mismatch may limit access
- Many youth may seek belonging and connection before seeking out formal mental health services

Strategic Opportunities:

- Create stronger mental health navigation and referral pathways
- Expand preventative wellness spaces focused on belonging, identity, and connection
- Strengthen trusted adult capacity across schools, OST, mentoring, and community settings
- Improve coordination between schools and community-based mental health providers
- Normalize mental wellness through youth-led, culturally responsive, and community-based spaces



Mapping our efforts to Strengthen Opportunities

Strengthening Opportunities

Our efforts to connect young people to meaningful places to go and roles to play.

Alexandria Ploggers. Combines jogging with neighborhood litter cleanup to promote environmental stewardship and wellness.	Campagna Center arts/STEM clubs	First Gen to College. Supports first-generation students navigating college applications, scholarships, and resources.	Student Government Association (SGA)	MSA (Muslim Student Association). Provides a space for faith connection, dialogue, and community service.	Programs			School athletics	Community Lodgings
Fashion Club. Brings students together to explore fashion trends and creative expression.	Families 4 Families. Organizes food collections and service projects supporting local families.	Girl Up! (student club that develops leadership skills and supports global gender equity initiatives)	Students Demand Action. Student advocacy group promoting safer gun laws and civic engagement.	Interact (student club Rotary-affiliated service club offering volunteer opportunities and leadership experience.)	Volunteer Alexandria service-learning	WDC youth employment programs (including SYEP)	Wilderness Kids Alexandria	Scouts	Alexandria Jr. Academy
American Red Cross Club. Supports community service initiatives such as blood drives and disaster preparedness outreach.	Girls Advancing in STEM (GAINS). Encourages girls to explore STEM careers and connect with mentors and peers.	Latinos Unidos (Creates space for Latino students to connect, lead, and support their community.)		Key Club (Student-led service organization focused on volunteering and leadership development.)	4-H	ACPS Career & Technical Education	Alexandria Mentoring Partnership programs	Seaport Foundation Apprenticeship	Youth In Service (YES)
Social Justice Club. Raises awareness about social issues and promotes advocacy for positive community change		FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America - Builds leadership skills through business, finance, and technology learning opportunities.)	Youth Leadership Conference	HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America - student club that prepares students interested in healthcare careers through leadership and competition opportunities)	Afterschool programs	ALX Beyond Program Locator	Youth In Progress	Titan Teen Takeover Nights	Training Futures (NVFS)
UNICEF Club. Advocates for children's rights through service and community engagement.	Crew Boosters. Supports the Alexandria City High School rowing team through outreach and engagement activities.	DECA at ACHS (Competitive business organization focused on leadership, entrepreneurship, and career readiness.)	PBIS Club (student club that Supports positive school climate initiatives through student leadership)	International Student Leadership Club (student club that elevates student leadership across Alexandria's diverse international student community.)	American Red Cross certifications	Building Better Futures	NoVA Urban League	Opportunities Plus (Liberty's Promise)	Campagna Center afterschool programs
Titan Robotics. Designs, builds, and competes with robots through FIRST Robotics competitions.	Garden Club. Maintains a community garden and donates produce to local food banks.	FCCLA (Family, Career & Community Leaders of America - student club that Builds leadership skills through community service and family and consumer sciences education.)		National Art Honor Society (student club that romotes artistic leadership, scholarship, and community engagement through visual arts.)	Project Discovery	RPCA Lifeguard Counselor-in-Training	Early Childhood Learning Institute (Hopkins House)	High School Internship Program (Urban Alliance)	RPCA youth programs
Speech & Debate Team. Develops public speaking, argumentation, and competitive debate skills.		Tri-M Music Honor Society (Leadership and service opportunities for students involved in music programs.)	Untouchables	National Honor Society (Recognizes academic achievement through service and leadership opportunities.)	Teen Hours at Charles Houston (M-F 3-9 All Day Sat.)	Teen Hours at Chick Armstrong (F 6-11)	Teen Hours at Patrick Henry (M-F 6-9 Sat. 1-8)	Teen Takeover at Beatley Library (M 5:30-7:30)	Teen Hours at Ramsay (F & Sat. 6-11)
Helping Hands. Volunteer club supporting food distribution for local families	Sports teams	Titans 4 Scholars (Student leadership campaign supporting college scholarships through fundraising.)	One Health Community. Explores connections between environmental, animal, and human health through service and advocacy.	Architecture Construction Engineering. Connects students with mentors and career pathways in architecture, engineering, and construction.	Communities in Schools partnerships support students, families, orgs, etc.		Community Cookouts	High School Peer Advocates & Young Adult Peer Advocates	
Threads for All. Organizes clothing drives supporting local nonprofits.	Soccer Club. Offers pickup games and discussion for students interested in soccer.	Women of the Future Club (student club that supports leadership development and empowerment for young women.)		Youth-led	Gang Prevention Community Task Force Strategic Focus: Supporting access to safe afterschool and enrichment opportunities		Youth CTE Working Group	Summer Youth Resource Fair (ACPS)	
					Partnerships		Alexandria Mentoring Partnership	Shared Teen Calendar	

Identify Alignment, Gaps, Fragmentation, & Opportunities

You are not expected to sort every effort on the board. Instead, focus on patterns. Which areas already have strong infrastructure? Where do you see gaps? Where are efforts happening separately that could work better together? The goal is to understand how the system functions, not to categorize every program

WHERE WE ALREADY HAVE MOMENTUM & CAPACITY



Look for Alignment

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where are we already doing a lot of work that's connected enough to function as a system/supported by strong infrastructure? Which of these efforts are already working on the same outcome?

Think about where we already have:

- multiple programs serving a similar purpose/goals
- strong partnerships in place
- existing infrastructure we could build on quickly
- schools, City agencies, and community partners working in the same direction
- multiple ways youth can access support
- efforts happening consistently across multiple grade levels or neighborhoods
- momentum or leadership ownership
- shared referral pathways

This seems to be the strongest area of investment in Alexandria

Communities in Schools' work both within and across schools - coordinating enrichment opportunities, services

The City's Youth Services Directory - so helpful!

Amanda

Scholarship Fund - adding as a placeholder but I'm not sure about how their work is implemented

Amanda

ALX Beyond Youth Program Locator

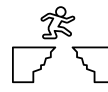
AVID is a great resource - I don't work in secondary school but I understand that they work well with the school. Curious about collaboration/alignment across programs and initiatives

Amanda

RPCA Community Engagement/AMP team will hire two "teen influencers" for summer 2026 to help connect youth to opportunities

Madeline Nance

WHERE YOUTH NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET



Look for Gaps

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where would we expect to see more support than currently exists? Where do opportunities or support exist but youth still can't access them easily?

For example, think about:

- barriers (transportation, financial, stigma, cultural, structural, physical, geographical, language, etc.)
- awareness/navigation
- culturally responsive providers
- youth who may be disconnected from opportunities and caring adults
- racial & social disparities
- weekend/evening coverage
- access across schools and neighborhoods
- supports by grade-level
- geographic locations/hotspots without support
- lack of coordination across agencies
- youth voice not connected to decisions
- lack of transparency about decisions

Are any of these things making it harder for youth to participate in the efforts we identified on the left?

"Programs tend to be clustered at schools and recreation centers, with fewer programs offered in the West End." 2023 OSTP Landscape Study Finding

Chelsea Eickert

"Transportation and space availability were identified as barriers to engaging more elementary school youth." OSTP Landscape Study

Chelsea Eickert

Only 53% of Alexandria youth participate in structured out of school time programs. White youth are two and half times more likely to participate in a youth program than Hispanic youth. Participation in creative activities has declined to just 16% overall, with no racial or ethnic group exceeding that average

Chelsea Eickert

"The need for unified transparency about program availability was flagged as a high priority across all family listening sessions." 2023 OSTP Landscape Study Finding

"For those that cannot afford the fees and do not qualify for free/reduced programs, cost can be an issue." 2023 OSTP Landscape Study Finding

"Getting information to families was a top barrier to engaging middle school youth, identified by 45% of respondents." OSTP Landscape Study

Chelsea Eickert

"Students and families from historically marginalized communities do not feel welcome - they feel stigmatized." 2023 OSTP Landscape Study Finding

Chelsea Eickert

Despite there being many structured opportunities for youth, some gather in commercial areas (i.e. McDonald's, Bradlee Shopping Center, Seminary/Kenmore Plaza, etc.) instead of participating in programs. Could this be because "Middle school and high schoolers place high value on being with friends. Teenagers value being with friends over specific activities," OSTP Landscape Study.

Chelsea Eickert

There are significant barriers to accessing the many incredible programs in Alexandria. Systems-level support is going to be needed to make it happen (outlined in ALX Beyond landscape study).

"Finances, transportation and connecting with families were identified as barriers to reaching high schoolers." OSTP Landscape Study

Chelsea Eickert

some youth need to be home to care for younger siblings

Madeline Nance

depending on event/setting, older youth don't want to go to same place as younger youth and want a clear separation

Madeline Nance

WHERE COORDINATION IS MISSING & WOULD INCREASE IMPACT



Look for Fragmentation

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where are efforts happening but not coordinated (youth have to navigate between them alone)? Where are similar efforts happening separately that could work better together?

Where could coordination (*not new programs*) make the biggest difference?

Think about where there might be:

- programs working toward similar goals but not connected to each other
- youth or families having to navigate multiple systems to get help
- partners doing related work without talking to each other
- informal referrals instead of structured referrals
- efforts happening in isolation rather than as part of a network
- duplication without intentional alignment
- a reliance on individual relationships instead of coordinated systems
- areas where coordination would make participation easier for youth

Communities in Schools is not connected to the Children & Youth Community Plan work or the Center for Economic Supports (maybe not connected to DCHS at all?)

Chelsea Eickert

How connected are other groups with the Gang Prevention Community Task Force? Does communication flow in and out with this group?

Connection with ACPS administrators could be a lot stronger in order to align our work and strengthen our coordination across plans/systems

Chelsea Eickert

ACPS partnerships office's provision of school connections w/ community partners - I see that there are some schools that have more supportive programs and initiatives than others that often comes down to the school's capacity to manage the initiative

Amanda

College and career advising in ACHS - hard to get in, unclear how to utilize counselors

Amanda

There is a plan for this in the ALX Beyond landscape study, but there has to be community-wide alignment around the plan, as well as an understanding of the resources and capacity it takes to address fragmentation.

Youth often pointed to uneven funding across school clubs and sports teams during the Youth Needs Assessment

Chelsea Eickert

WHERE WE COULD ACT WITHIN ONE YEAR



Look for Opportunities

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where could coordination increase impact quickly?

Think about where could:

- small adjustments make existing programs easier to access?
- shared outreach improve participation?
- partners align schedules, locations, or transportation?
- youth voice already present be connected to decision-making?
- trusted adults already working with youth extend their reach?
- we pilot something small with visible results within a year?
- one organization support another without creating a new program?

Repeatedly sharing the ALX Beyond Program Locator through a community-wide communications plan (involving multiple communications channels with broad outreach)

Yes! Let's leverage our youth networks to support the creation and implementation of a community-wide communications plan! however, the City's approval process may become a barrier to progress...

Chelsea Eickert

The CHIP, GPCTF, (and maybe CYFCC's S&B Goal Group?) have selected "expanding access to OSTP opportunities" as one of their priority areas.

Chelsea Eickert

Some ways that CYFCC, CSSG, RAISE, YDT, YSCC, & Safety & Belonging Work Group can support the OSTP Landscape Study's Recommendations:

- Advocacy & elevation of policy recommendations & equity gaps,
- Alignment of facilities, scheduling, & outreach,
- Communications Plan,
- Resource Sharing,
- Navigation Support,
- Outreach, Training Support,
- Convening of Providers, &
- Shared Peer Learning

Chelsea Eickert

Let's make sure that if this strategic area becomes our priority, we form a strong connection with the Gang Prevention Community Task Force, ALX Beyond, the CHIP's work, Connecting Youth Initiative, and any other coalition body focused on expanding access to OSTP opportunities.

Chelsea Eickert

Can the City/nonprofits somehow support and elevate the many ACHS student clubs available to youth?

Chelsea Eickert

Can anyone connect Communities in Schools to our work/efforts?

Chelsea Eickert

Share youth data/Youth Needs Assessment Findings & OSTP Landscape Study with all these coalitions/initiatives, if we haven't already

Chelsea Eickert

Can youth service providers coordinate efforts to conduct shared youth outreach at Seminary/Kenmore Plaza?

Chelsea Eickert

Find ways of connecting systems-involved youth (i.e. kids in foster care/child welfare system, court services, behavioral health services, etc.) to all these OSTP opportunities and resources

Chelsea Eickert

Analysis of our Board: Strengthening Opportunities

Our efforts to connect young people to meaningful places to go and roles to play.

Our Community's Strengths:

- There is no shortage of opportunities for young people in Alexandria. Across schools, city programs, nonprofits, workforce initiatives, leadership groups, athletics, clubs, service-learning opportunities, internships, and mentoring programs, there are numerous places where youth can: build skills, develop relationships, contribute to their community, explore interests, gain leadership experience, prepare for careers develop a sense of purpose and belonging

Chelsea Eickert

Gaps:

- Access is not equitable.
- Youth cannot benefit from opportunities they don't know exist. We repeatedly identified awareness challenges, communication gaps, and inconsistent outreach
- Participation often relies on individual staff, teachers, counselors, and trusted adults who help youth discover the opportunities available.
- Transportation is a significant barrier
- Some youth are disconnected from these existing opportunities because they may have limited support from adults, face transportation barriers, balance work or family responsibilities, or may not feel or be connected to school
- The transition from Middle School to High School opportunities may be unclear

Chelsea Eickert

Fragmentation:

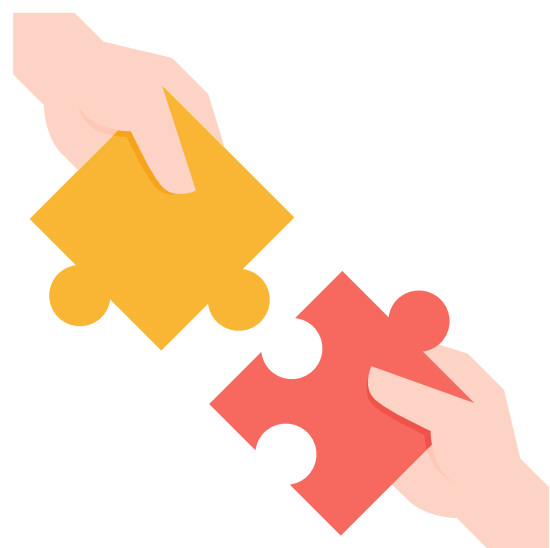
- We noted that many organizations provide valuable opportunities, but they are not always connected or build on one another. For example, are there pathways for a youth to move from one opportunity (like a mentoring program) to another (like a leadership role)?
- Because providers are not always coordinated, organizations may be serving similar youth and outreach efforts may overlap, which can create confusion for youth, families, and even staff.

Chelsea Eickert

Strategic Opportunities:

- Help youth move from one experience/opportunity to another by: connecting existing opportunities and creating intentional progression pathways, using ALX Beyond's Program Locator, improving outreach, increasing awareness, helping families navigate available options, and making opportunities easier to find
- Strengthen connections between schools and opportunities outside of school through school-based outreach, referrals, club recruitment, workforce pathway awareness, and OST enrollment
- Address access barriers, such as transportation, cost, awareness, scheduling, eligibility requirements
- Align with and support existing OSTP efforts. The ALX Beyond OSTP Landscape Study has already mapped opportunities, identified barriers, gathered community input, and developed recommendations, which we can all help to advance.

Chelsea Eickert



Mapping our efforts to Strengthen Systems

Strengthening Systems

Our efforts to create policies, structures, and institutions that make safety easier to experience.

Library's Teen Advisory Group

High School Peer Advocates & Young Adult Peer Advocates
(youth serve on boards & work with community leaders)

Youth Services Coordinating Council

City-School Staff Group

Student Government Association

Youth Ambassadors

PBIS Club (student club that supports positive school climate initiatives through student leadership)

Partnerships

Gang Prevention Community Task Force Strategic Focus: Supporting youth leadership and peer-led solutions

Multicultural Student Achievement Network (MSAN).
Supports student leadership focused on equity and inclusive school practices.

Youth-led

Programs

Trauma-Informed Spaces Work

ACPS Safety & Security Policies

RPCA's Safe Place sites

ACPS Anonymous Reporting System

Safe Routes to Schools

Participatory Action Research

Youth seats on Boards
(ACAP, SAPCA, CYFCC, Commission for Women, CSB, ACPS Board)

Policies

Identify Alignment, Gaps, Fragmentation, & Opportunities

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WHERE WE ALREADY HAVE MOMENTUM & CAPACITY



Look for Alignment

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where are we already doing a lot of work that's connected enough to function as a system/supported by strong infrastructure?

Which of these efforts are already working on the same outcome?

Think about where we already have:

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- multiple ways youth can access support
- efforts happening consistently across multiple grade levels or neighborhoods
- momentum or leadership ownership
- shared referral pathways

The **Youth Services Coordinating Council** convenes youth-service providers from community-based orgs and city agencies every month who serve a similar purpose - provides existing infrastructure we could build on quickly to align partners

Chelsea Eickert

Civic Action Projects (12th grade US Gov) and **Project Citizen curriculum** (8th grade Civics) are natural opportunities for youth voice to inform city policies, programming, & practices

Chelsea Eickert

11 boards & commissions (17%) have seats dedicated to youth; Together, these leadership bodies dedicate 14 seats to youth who are provided a stipend for their participation

Chelsea Eickert

Many **Youth Peer Advocates and Ambassadors** also serve on boards and commissions - seems to be a pipeline for youth leadership

Chelsea Eickert

The **City-School Staff Group** convenes a group of leadership from youth-serving departments (Libraries, RPCA, DCHS, CSU), the City Manager's Office, Office of Analytics, Innovation, and Data, and ACPS nearly every month - potential to have department heads unify messaging, standardize trainings, disseminate info among all staff, get us to work in the same direction, etc.

Chelsea Eickert

RAISE offers a free workshop on Designing Trauma-Informed Spaces and a free organizational assessment for organizations wanting to become more trauma-informed and healing-centered

Chelsea Eickert

WHERE YOUTH NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET



Look for Gaps

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- supports by grade-level
- geographic locations/hotspots without support
- lack of coordination across agencies
- youth voice not connected to decisions
- lack of transparency about decisions

Are any of these things making it harder for youth to participate in the efforts we identified on the left?

Barriers to engaging in decision making or participating on Boards and Commissions: limited/lack of transportation to/from night meetings, lack of adults who aren't equipped to support youth engagement, adultism and stereotypes about youth held by adults, feeling tokenized, patronized, or silenced by adults, time (youth have very busy/tight schedules & competing demands like work or needing to be home to care for younger siblings), not invited or encouraged to meetings where decisions that effect youth are made, low self-confidence, systems where certain adults must have all the decision making power, government often uses language that is intimidating, alienating or confusing to the general public and reports are not always presented in an engaging or accessible way, previous negative experiences interacting with people in power/the government, adults who are unwilling to give up power and control over a process, family's socio-economic status

Chelsea Eickert

RAISE does not have a coordinator

Chelsea Eickert

Tension between school board and city council and our collective struggle around having honest conversations with each other make progress in any area difficult

WHERE COORDINATION IS MISSING & WOULD INCREASE IMPACT



Look for Fragmentation

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where are efforts happening but not coordinated (youth have to navigate between them alone)? Where are similar efforts happening separately that could work better together? Where could coordination (*not new programs*) make the biggest difference?

Think about where there might be:

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- duplication without intentional alignment
- a reliance on individual relationships instead of coordinated systems
- areas where coordination would make participation easier for youth

ACPS partnerships office's provision of school connections w/ community partners - I see that there are some schools that have more supportive programs and initiatives than others that often comes down to the school's capacity to manage the initiative

Amanda

strong youth leadership exists but not many are connected to decision-making

How youth are referred to leadership opportunities. It can sometimes seem like the youth who have certain teachers or are in certain more prominent programs are connected with multiple leadership/systems level roles rather than evenly spreading awareness and recruitment. This is part of the awareness theme we discussed earlier

Amanda

Does anyone know anything about the Mayor's Youth Forum? What themes are emerging? Is there a plan to create recommendations from what's being learned in these forums? where is it headed?

WHERE WE COULD ACT WITHIN ONE YEAR



Look for Opportunities

Among the efforts that we have already identified on the left, where could coordination increase impact quickly?

Think about where could:

- small adjustments make existing programs easier to access?
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- one organization support another without creating a new program?

The **Gang Prevention Community Task Force** and **CYFCC's School Conditions Goal Group** have made this a priority which means there's an opportunity to coordinate work that elevates youth and family voice in systems-change efforts and decision making power

Ask the City School Staff Group: Which City or School Department would like to bring the Designing Trauma-Informed Spaces workshop to their staff and a free organizational assessment and technical support to become more trauma-informed and healing-centered?

Leverage Civics and US Gov classes to create feedback loops where ACPS & City Leaders report back their progress on youth concerns. Also ask students to survey their peers and evaluate CYCP efforts every year.

Chelsea Eickert

Find ways to support and elevate the Youth Safety & Resilience Initiative

Recommendation to the City School Staff Group: Find ways of connecting systems-involved youth (i.e. kids in foster care/child welfare system, court services, behavioral health services, etc.) to youth leadership opportunities and decision making power

Chelsea Eickert

The **Youth Services Coordinating Council** is becoming stronger in practicing alignment and coordination

Analysis of our Board: Strengthening Systems

Our efforts to create policies, structures, and institutions that make safety easier to experience.

Our Community's Strengths:

- Strong cross-sector partnership structures already exist
- Youth voice and leadership are increasingly embedded across systems
- Existing coordination bodies provide infrastructure for collaboration
- Trauma-informed and prevention-oriented approaches already have traction
- Multiple systems are investing in youth leadership, belonging, and prevention
- Community-wide commitment to youth well-being is evident across sectors

Fragmentation:

- Multiple prevention-oriented initiatives appear to be operating simultaneously but separately
- School, city, nonprofit, and community systems don't always function as an integrated ecosystem
- The community has places where partners come together and talk, plan, and share information (coordination structures), but that doesn't always translate into coordinated action on the ground (implementation pathways).
- Information sharing, referrals, and communication appear uneven across systems

Gaps:

- Systems rely heavily on individual champions & informal relationships
- Prevention approaches aren't consistently applied across institutions
- Youth voice may not yet be fully institutionalized in decision-making processes
- Coordination may not consistently translate into operational alignment
- Youth and families may still experience systems as difficult to navigate
- Equity in access, participation, and outcomes may vary across neighborhoods and populations

Strategic Opportunities:

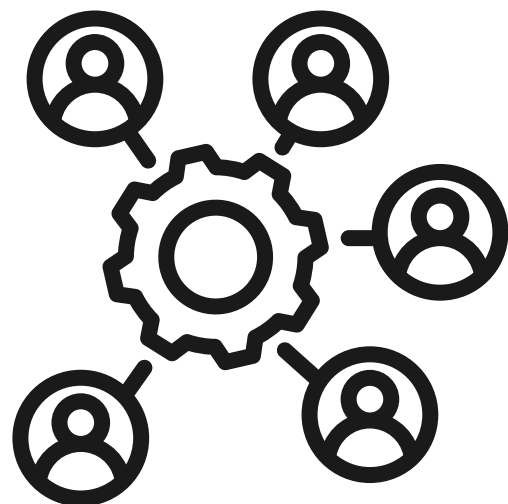
- Develop a shared prevention framework across systems
- Institutionalize youth voice and shared decision-making structures
- Strengthen coordination between schools, city agencies, nonprofits, and community partners
- Build systems and policies that sustain prevention efforts over time
- Expand place-based or neighborhood-level prevention coordination
- Improve communication, navigation, and cross-system alignment
- Focus on integrating and strengthening existing systems rather than creating entirely new ones



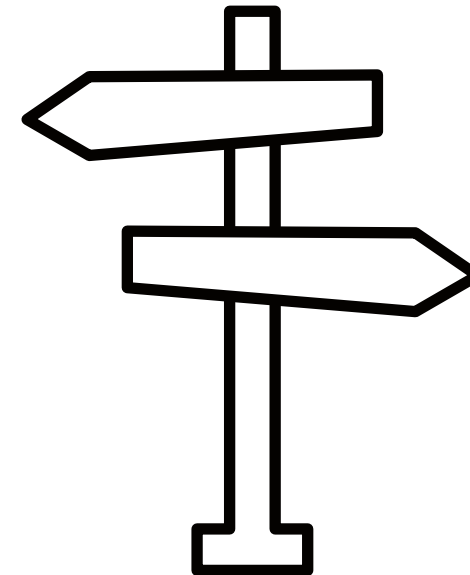
Patterns Appearing Across All Five Strategic Directions



Alexandria has many programs, partnerships, youth leaders, and caring adults.

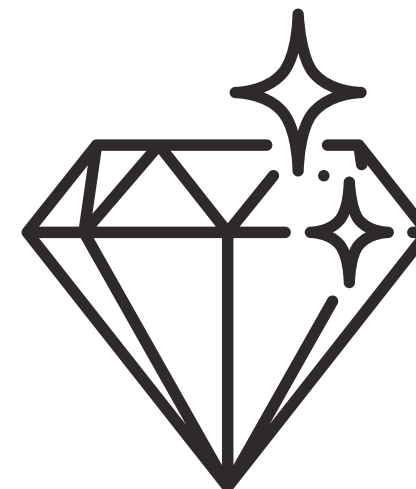


Our challenge is helping youth and families experience our efforts as a connected system rather than a collection of separate opportunities.



We struggle with:

- Navigation
- Awareness
- Referrals
- Transportation
- Consistent implementation
- Cross-system coordination



CYCP's greatest value may be helping existing efforts become more connected, coordinated, and easier for youth and families to navigate