



Office of Research and Evaluation
Research Grantee Study Summary

Smith College

Young People as Teachers

What is the background for this study?

This study examines programs that position young people as teachers (YPAT) to distill and disseminate recommendations to improve the design and implementation of programs that provide opportunities for young people to teach. Employing mixed methods to examine the structures and intended outcomes of YPAT programs, the study hopes to provide an understanding of an innovative pathway into the education profession in a time when American schools are facing a shortage of educators.

What are the research questions?

This study aims to understand and inform the implementation of YPAT programs. Research questions include:

1. How do YPAT organizations describe their mission and practices? What variations exist and what are their features? Why do youth participate?
2. How do alumni describe their growth from participating in YPAT programs?
3. What are the best practices in design and implementation of YPAT programs?
4. How do YPAT programs prepare and support young people to work as teachers?
5. What are the effects of these programs on schools, neighborhoods, children, and families?
6. How can YPAT programs address local teacher shortages? What do teacher educators who receive alumni of these programs need to understand to meet the needs of teachers-to-be considering career paths? What are the tenets of a scalable YPAT model?

Who are your community partners?

The study engages K-12, out-of-school time, and AmeriCorps partners from Springfield, Massachusetts. In addition, the study engages YPAT leaders, alumni, and current participants from throughout the United States.

How are community members engaged in the research to action process?

Members of this study's community partners serve in a variety of roles across the project, including acting as members of the study's research team, and the YPAT leader working group. The study includes co-learning and collaborative knowledge production.

Study At-A-Glance

Study Title
Young People as Teachers

Researchers
Sam Intrator, PhD
Graeham Dodd, EdS

Grant Cohort 2022

Timeline 2022-2025

Study Location Northampton, Massachusetts

Study Topic Area(s)
Education Across the Life Course
Volunteering, Nonprofit Studies, and National Service
Youth Development

What data and methods are used in this study?

This mixed methods participatory research study spans five phases. Phase one includes a field scan to gain an understanding of the local and national landscape of YPAT programs and a literature review. Phase two includes semi-structured interviews with staff of programs that work at YPAT programs to understand features of their programs, in particular, how they train and support novice teachers. Data from these interviews will be used to develop a framework of YPAT core components. Phase three involves developing a survey instrument as well as semi-structured interviews and focus groups with YPAT alumni to understand how they describe their growth from participating in YPAT programs. Data from these interviews and focus groups will be used to refine the framework of YPAT core components. Phase four is a community action pilot in which researchers analyze the data collected in prior phases and apply their findings to develop and launch a pilot YPAT program in collaboration with community partners. The final phase of the study is a yearlong YPAT leaders working group, a form of participatory learning and elaborating on the research findings alongside practitioners, and curating recommendations and tools for YPAT programs, and includes a blueprint for other YPAT programs.

How does this research translate to community action?

This study synthesizes research to guide action in phases four and five of the study. The research-based pilot YPAT program in Springfield is implemented in collaboration with community partners from Springfield Public Schools, AmeriCorps staff from programs serving Springfield, Project Coach youth, and alumni of other YPAT programs.

What are potential opportunities to apply study findings and/or build on this research?

The findings of this study can be used to strengthen YPAT programs in the local area, including Springfield, and can inform an emerging national conversation on YPAT programs. This study aims to address a current gap in research literature on the design and structure of YPAT programs. This conversation is especially relevant given the teacher shortage, as YPAT approaches may be able to be used to create an innovative pathway to the teaching workforce.

For more information on the study:

Study Contact(s)	Sam Intrator	Professor of Education and Child Study	Smith College	sintrato@smith.edu
	Graeham Dodd	Director of the Education Initiative	Smith College	gdodd@smith.edu

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