

Northeast Spokane Youth Assessment

The Zone Project | 2019-2020



Youth Engagement Map, CIPD

Lindsey Shaw— The Zone Project, AmeriCorps VISTA 2019-2020



“Often the ones affected by the problem have the best solutions.”



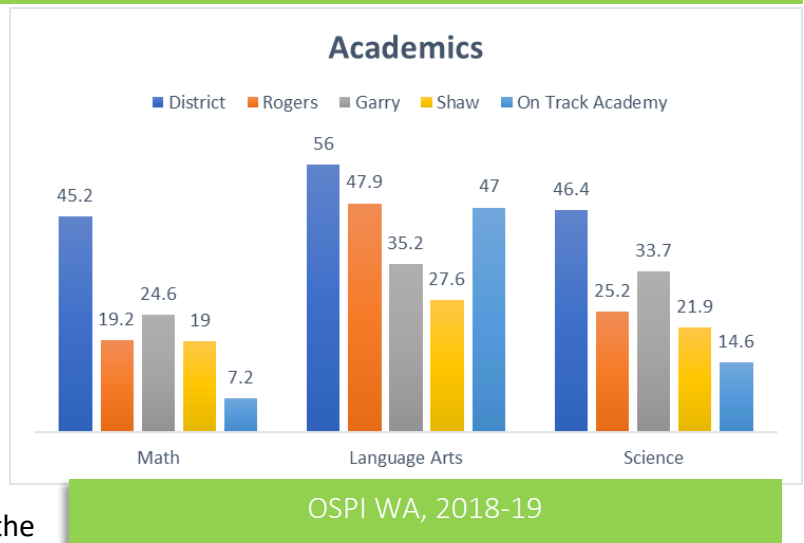
THE ZONE IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF NORTHEAST SPOKANE PROJECT

Background & Vision

The Zone Project is a place-based, community initiative in the neighborhoods of Northeast Spokane, WA. We envision neighborhoods where all children are safe and nurtured, where residents and families are connected to school and community, and where all families have what they need to thrive.

Supported by the Northeast Community Center, we are growing collaboration of organizations, schools, government, youth, and families in the neighborhoods and schools that feed to Shaw and Garry Middle Schools in the NE quadrant of the City. The Zone Project works to build upon our assets to create transformational change and improved health. For over 50 years, residents of these neighborhoods have struggled with underemployment, higher rates of trauma and abuse, food and housing insecurity, and less educational attainment than other parts of Spokane County and Washington State. The opportunity gap caused by disparities in race, socioeconomic status, housing and geographic location contribute to an educational achievement gap and disparate health outcomes in NE Spokane.

The idea of community engaging more deeply with schools and supporting children and youth cradle to career grew out of conversations between counselors, teachers and administrators at Shaw Middle School in 2015. Seeing the challenges that students faced every day and the challenges to reaching academic milestones spurred Andre Wicks, then Assistant Principal of Shaw Middle School, to research models like the Harlem Children's Zone, Promise Neighborhoods and other national programs to improve outcomes for underserved youth in neighborhoods like NE Spokane.



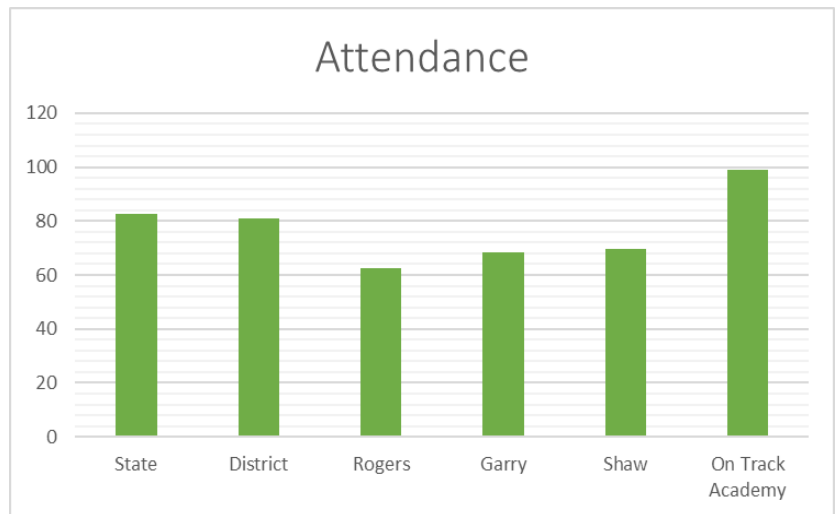
This led to a partnership between Spokane Schools and the City of Spokane to kick-start what became known as The Zone Project. Today, over 50 organizations and resident leaders are working together to find ways to improve outcomes for children, youth and families and eliminate the systemic barriers that have prevented families from exiting poverty and trauma. It all started with a concern for middle-schoolers reaching their full potential at Shaw Middle School.

With this assessment, The Zone Project is coming full circle. We have looked at the academic, social-emotional and health data of youth in NE Spokane. We wanted to do a deeper dive and listen to youth voices. What is it that youth truly desire? What are the barriers they face? How can we create a community initiative that truly engages youth in decision-making, program design and creates safe spaces where all can feel welcomed and valued? What can we learn from youth, from organizations that work every day with NE youth, and from best practices across our country?

Overview

In Northeast Spokane there is an overwhelming feeling when it comes to the youth. Teachers are worn thin. Counselors are overloaded. Youth report higher levels of depression and school attendance is low. In order to embolden youth and help them reach their full potential, youth require access to leadership skill-building, decision making, and soft skills so they can be leaders in the community and help shape the future of education and youth programs.

By not incorporating youth voice into an expanded learning program design, we are overlooking one of our greatest assets.



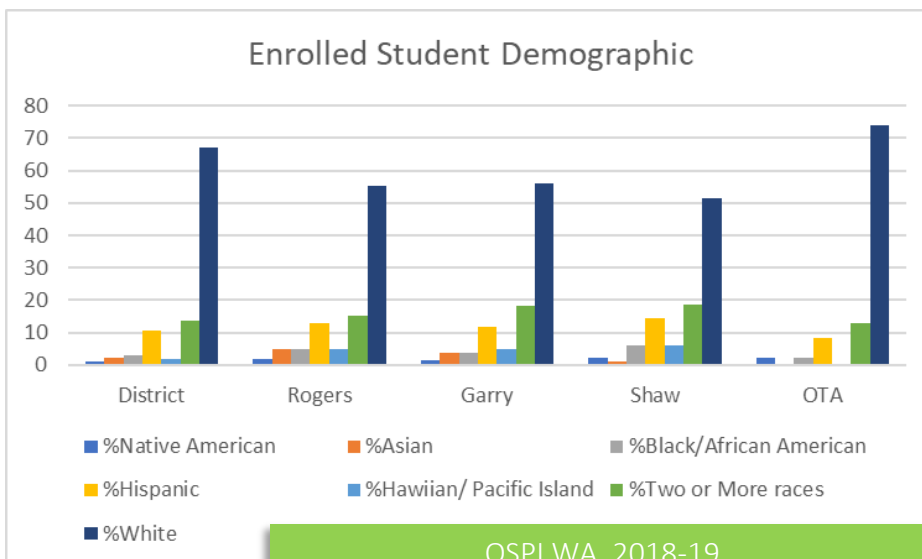
OSPI WA, 2018-19

Gaining Insight from Youth

The Zone Project, through the leadership of AmeriCorps VISTA member Lindsey Shaw and Gonzaga University Wolff Fellow Jackie Baca, interviewed and listened to more than 50 teens from October through November 2019. We interviewed students at Garry Middle School, Rogers High School, Shaw Middle School, and at Gonzaga University's after school programs at Shaw and Garry.

The intent was to interview a demographic that reflects the youth who live in Northeast Spokane. Approximately 40% of youth in NE Spokane ages 0-18 identify as kids of color or Hispanic ethnicity. We interviewed about 20% students of color ages 12-18. Interviewing students was harder than anticipated. It was difficult to gain their trust and to get the necessary permissions from school and after school programs. We found success with the help of

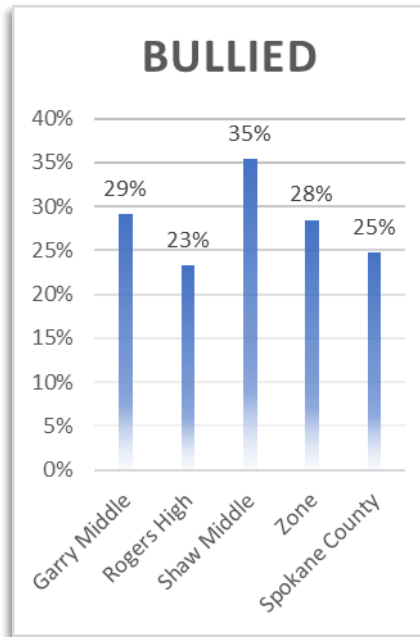
Communities In Schools at Garry, Rogers, and Shaw including their ASB leadership and Marshall Island groups. We ate lunch at Rogers with the help of the Northeast Support Team (N.E.S.T.). Gonzaga University assisted by allowing us to engage with one of their after-school programs called Connections. A lot of our success came from having snacks and gift cards, to compensate students for sharing their time and expertise.



OSPI WA, 2018-19

Result of Interviews

If the young in our tribe are not initiated in our tribe, they will burn it down to feel the warmth. -African Proverb



Healthy Youth Survey, 2018

Do Youth Feel Safe and Welcome:

- Many said they felt safe in their neighborhood, however not always after dark. One student said that he likes to go to the skate park with his bike, but has feared someone will steal it and doesn't ride his bike to school because of this fear
- A lack of racial and ethnic diversity in school staff, makes students of color feel like they are not represented or reflected in the community

Note-worthy Responses:

- One youth proposed having guest chefs or restaurants come into the school once month to give people a chance to see what other foods taste like, because many families in the NE do not have a dining out budget
- Another said, "School is so old fashioned and out of date, anything I want to learn is on YouTube".
- "Character Strong is good, and everyone should have access to it. It would make for a better world".
- One Student asked for healthy relationships and domestic violence prevention, because "No one wants to talk about those things, and that is real life".



Healthy Youth Survey, 2018

What Youth Like to Do:

- Hang with friends
- Play Sports: Basketball, swim
- Be outdoors: Bike, Hike, Camp

Desired Careers:

- Police Officers
- Teachers
- Astronauts
- Pro Sports players
- Engineers
- Business owners
- Cosmetologists

What Youth Seek:

- Access to healthy food and to learn how to prepare a warm meal
- Safe places, for after school and summer, to hang with friends and play cards
- Sports: Basketball, Volleyball, Fencing, Soccer, Archery
- More creative arts: dance, music, video editing, YouTube, makeup and hair
- Home economics

Marshall Island Gathering

Between 1946 and 1958 the United States detonated 67 nuclear bombs on, in, and above the Marshall Islands, vaporizing whole islands, carving craters into its shallow lagoons, and exiling hundreds of people from their homes. The United States then shipped over 130 tons of radioactive soil from a Nevada testing site. According to research, Runit Dome, located on one of the Marshall Islands, has higher radioactive levels than soil near Chernobyl and Fukushima. America has military bases located on these islands because of their strategic location, crating over-population concerns. This history, in combination with global warming, has led to the Marshall Islands sinking, with some areas increasingly uninhabitable. In exchange for the use of their homeland for military purposes, the US allows Marshallese the ability to live and travel around the US without a visa, but not easy access to health care. Only in 2018 did Washington State create greater access to affordable healthcare for natives of Micronesia, Palau and the Marshall Islands. Hawaii, Springdale, AK, and Spokane, WA have the highest populations of Marshallese Americans.

<https://www.latimes.com/projects/marshall-islands-nuclear-testing-sea-level-rise/>

<https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-marshall-islands-radiation-20190715-story.html>

The Marshallese come here rich in culture and lived experience and are eager to make this place their new home.

A need identified in our community is to connect the Marshallese student population with school and community. One day after school at Shaw 12-14 Marshall Island students gathered together. Food was provided by Communities In Schools and students were asked what they wanted to accomplish together. One of the students stood up with his fist in the air saying, “We are going to save the Marshall Islands!” The love for the island culture and their heritage is palpable. They expressed a desire to go on field trips, go swimming, camping, sleepovers, make art (even though they find the idea to be expensive), cook, go to Boys and Girls Club and do a dance performance as a group at the end of the year. It is apparent there is a need in our community for young Pacific Islanders to have a safe space to express themselves and their culture. We can only imagine the magic they could share with the community by expressing who they are and where they come from.

Learning from Adults Who serve Youth

Adults who work at youth-serving organizations in the area were interviewed as well: Boys and Girls Club, Planned Parenthood, Communities In Schools at Garry, Rogers, and Shaw, Create Your Statement, Youth For Christ, Next Gen Zone, On Track and Shaw's Principals, Rogers HS Vice Principal, and N.E.S.T-North East Support team (facilitated by ESD 101). One of the first interviews was with a retired Rogers High School teacher. When asked what gaps

are present when serving teens in Northeast Spokane, she drew up Maslow's triangle, describing that many students in the Northeast Spokane are struggling to meet basic needs: Food, Shelter, Love.



Maslow's Triangle

The **Gear Up** counselors, who follow a class of students from middle school through high school and are now based at Rogers HS, expressed concerns about students needing conflict resolution and coping skills, having low self-worth, needing more warm healthy food, and access to clothing and shoes



that don't look like hand-me-downs. They brought up how socially youth struggle to connect on their own. Nikki Ziegler from Communities In Schools at Garry MS said, "The needs of students at Garry are surprisingly similar to the needs I've seen while working in Cape Town, South Africa." Both Garry and Shaw Middle school said this was the first year that students came into school asking for the Bite2Go program. **Bite2Go** provides a good mix of healthy, kid friendly, easy to open, single serving, non-perishable food items to cover meals and three snacks for over the weekend discreetly in a backpack. Many organizations are busy building trusted relationships and getting the youth interested in walking into their space.

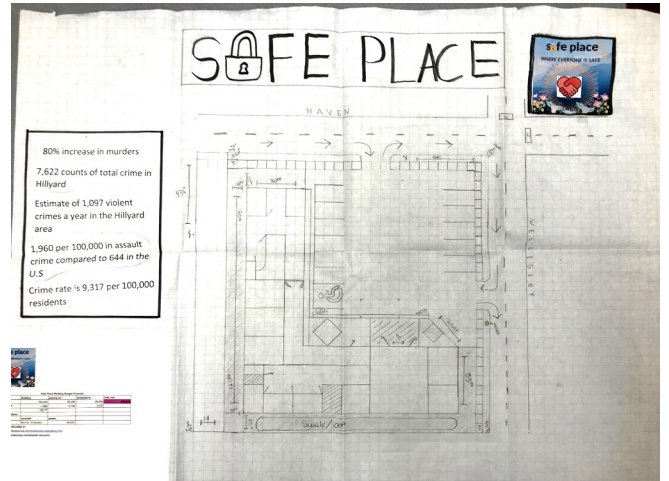


On Track Academy

On Track Academy is an alternative learning environment, located on the Shaw Middle School and NewTech Skills Center Campus in NE Spokane, is leading the way. Students thrive in this environment because OTA knows that relationships are key. Every scholar has a dedicated advisor who knows them personally and provides support with goal setting, much like an elementary setting.

The Zone invited On Track's Project Based Learning program, taught by the leadership teacher Amanda St. Pierre, to present their ideas of what they would potentially do with vacant land in Hillyard to visitors and staff at the NE Community Center. Students had wonderful ideas, most of which were safe places for teens to hang out, express themselves, and make an income. One was a resource center for homeless

that included laundry and garden space. Another had a planetarium, which tells us that teens do not see a limit on what amazing things could develop in Northeast Spokane, if only someone would believe in the youth who imagine it!



On track students designed spaces in Hillyard where they saw a need. This is a safe place for teens. Projects were detailed down to the parking spots and restroom space.

Local Organizations with Student Leadership Opportunities

[Peace and Justice Action League](#)

“Youth Action Leaders Program -Offers a 10-month leadership development program for young people who are already active in or are leading student groups, faith communities, and community groups as well as for folks new to activism. It's a great opportunity to help new leaders grow and create student projects!”

[Red Flag](#)

“Create Your Statement's mission is to bring education and awareness of dating abuse while promoting leadership and character development among today's youth.”

[Planned Parenthood](#)

“Youth Empowerment Program-is a peer to peer program that serves to positively impact teens of Spokane. The program teaches local high school students to be accurate and trustworthy resources for their peers about sexual health and healthy relationships.”

Examples of Outstanding Youth-Led Programs Outside of Spokane

Krownless Kings, Queens, and Kids

Krownless Kids is based out of Tacoma and created by Idris Joyce for communities that need to be uplifted. He does not discriminate whom he can have an impact on and has expanded his reach to include preschools as well as adults. He brings together champions within the community to teach and inspire his audience. When working with the youth, no matter how young, he starts by being on their level and asking them what they like, what they want to do and what is missing. Once interests are defined, he sneaks in facts relating to a time or place that coincides with the interest. For instance, if someone says they like basketball, he will talk about what year Michael Jordan won a championship and ask who the President was at that time. Idris says that when kids lead in what subjects they get to work on, they are excited to participate.

<https://www.facebook.com/KrownlessKings253/>

After School Matters

Chicago based, After School Matters has Arts, Leadership, Sports and STEM programs for teens. Their programs include a stipend to pay students to learn hard skills and realize their full potential. These programs provide safe, all-inclusive places for teens to gain hands on experience while working alongside skilled professionals and while learning how to be advocates. Teens gain confidence, leadership, teamwork, and community building skills. After School Matters has over 200 community partners including the city, parks, and library.

<https://www.afterschoolmatters.org/>

HNMA-Learn to Earn

Works closely with 12-16-year students in MN, to teach them real life skills for success in after school learning and even provides paid internships for teens in the summer. With some of their programs they have the students laying out their own ground rules, then the students feel like they have set their own boundaries not someone else.

<https://www.northeastkck.org/learn-to-earn>

Northfield Promise

Northfield Promise is out of Minnesota and part of Strive Together. They have an every child, cradle to career model. Northfield Promise's structure is intentionally designed for broad community participation, engagement and leadership.

<https://northfieldpromise.org/>



Northfield Promise hosted students from three neighboring school districts came together for a day-long youth data summit. They reviewed local disparity gaps and recommended ways to close those gaps.

Youthprise

Youthprise has a formula “Youth Engagement + Equity= Quality Results.” They focus on the whole child. They have a Youth Participatory Action Research team that is wanting to shift the way youth are engaged with programming and governance. These students research areas of youth disparities and then gives them the tools and power to be the change they would like to see.

<https://youthprise.org/resources-tools/2019-y-par-grant-and-cohort-rfp/>

Overall

Overall, youth engagement can be measured by how much youth voice is heard and considered in our community's decision making. Also, how often youth participate in decision-making about the programs and opportunities accessible to them. The data shows the needle is moving in the wrong direction. If the goal is to elevate our next generations and make sure they are prepared to be the leaders of our future, youth need incentives and recognition for their lived experience to authentically participate in community. Youth need to be able to see how their voices can have an impact their environment. There is a natural power that comes with the teens who band together in high school. We saw it recently with the climate change protests across the world, including here in Spokane. What would happen if youth were supported and encouraged to know how powerful they really are? What would they choose to do with such power in our community?

What we learned through this assessment is that communication must be a two way street . As a community, we must develop and properly fund the resources to engage youth in designing the world they want to actively participant in. When our youth are emboldened to make decisions and guide priorities, what goals and projects will be elevated? Currently youth need more opportunity to practice in leading and to see where their decisions take them. Having a chance to be involved before they become disengaged and haven't a chance to see the change they can be this world.



When students were asked if they felt cared for:

76%
YES

20%
SOMETIMES

4%
NO

“...Youth voice is crucial to the overall effectiveness of service- learning programs. Youth voice has a tremendous impact on program participation and program outcomes, both short term and long term.”

— Education Commission of the States

Recommendations to Support Youth Voice and Engagement in Northeast Spokane

- Create safe space for differences: Ages, races, skill sets and interests
- Consistent, supported leadership programs for 12-18 year-olds in NE Spokane in and out of school
- Value time and effort of the youth with gift cards, resume building, free summer camp, or paid internships
- Involve youth in decision making to create thriving schools and neighborhoods. Survey youth continuously, not just on the quality of current organization/programming but also of what they would like to see in future programs.
- Youth Advisory board for City Council district, school board, and/or for each organization that serves youth.
- Build trusted relationships that grow and support students for years. How can we support programs like Gear Up that support students in NE schools every year, especially transition years? What would the life of a student would look like if they had the same counselor from K-12? What would be the costs and benefits of these types of system changes?

Please reach out if you have any questions, comments, concerns or you would like to become more involved.

www.thezoneproject.org

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Thank you to all who participated in this assessment. We appreciate how you opened to us while you are busy with your own work and helped identify our community needs for our youth. There are some amazing people in our community that are working to make sure our youth thrive. Communities In Schools, The Gear Up Program, AmeriCorps, United Way, Planned Parenthood, Barb Silvey, ESD101, The Zone Project, Gonzaga, Boys and Girls Club, On Track Academy, YFC, The Next Gen Zone, the teachers and staff at Garry, Shaw, and Rogers. A huge thank you to Amber Waldref, the director of The Zone, for her undeniable will to make sure that Northeast Spokane has what it needs to become a better, healthier, safer place to live and raise a family.