

**Phillips Community Television
Evaluation Report
2004 – 2005**



Prepared by
Janet Madzey-Akale
Edited by Jennifer Griffin-Wiesner
Full Circle
Youth Development
Program Planning & Evaluation Services
December 30, 2005

Executive Summary

Phillips Community Television has been creating opportunities for inner-city youth, ages 9 – 18, to develop their own television programs, photography exhibits, Web pages, and personal projects that explore and highlight youth, family, and community issues. Phillips Community Television (PCTV) is a community-based non-profit organization in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where there are limited media opportunities accessible to young people. The program has existed for almost 14 years and has grown under the continual guidance of the program director. In spring 2004, PCTV embarked upon an ambitious evaluation project aimed at exploring the meaning of youths' engagement in the media arts program. Fifteen youth and eight adults were interviewed in small groups and individually during the September 2004 – June 2005 program year. It became evident during this process that the program successfully teaches media while creatively emphasizing positive youth development that ultimately impacts participants in numerous ways.

Allure of Media Arts

Phillips Community Television attracts young people because of the media possibilities it offers, including all aspects of television production, Web design, photography, and production of independent video projects. Youth are generally attracted to PCTV because they are interested in being on television, wanting to develop their technological skills, or looking for something to do with their friends. Once they are in the door, youth are typically captivated by the opportunities to explore their interests, be productive, and engage in meaningful work with peers in a safe environment. PCTV staff members assist youth in finding their “niche” in the media program. Youth are able to pursue various types of media activities that interest them and that allow them to use skills they came with such as writing, drawing, and composing poetry and music. Most youth, however, come to PCTV with minimal directly applicable skills and have learned a great deal about the media arts. The PCTV staff members are committed to exposing youth to and teaching them about media, and they successfully use media as a vehicle for engaging youth in positive out-of-school time activities. Because these practices keep youth involved over time, they are able to continually build upon what they have learned, practicing their media skills and applying their knowledge in increasingly challenging ways.

Positive Youth Development Practices

Phillips Community Television has a strong program theory that is in line with positive youth development research. Renowned youth development researchers Gisela Knopka and Karen Pittman¹ have articulated young people's basic needs like this:

¹ Adapted by the Minnesota Youth Work Institute from Konopka, G. 1973. “Requirements for healthy development of adolescent youth.” *Adolescence*, 8 (31), 2 – 25, and Pittman, K. J. and M. Wright. 1999. *A Rationale for Enhancing the Role of the Non-School Voluntary Sector in Youth Development* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research).

- Feel a sense of safety and structure;
- Experience active participation, group membership, and belonging;
- Develop self-worth through meaningful contribution;
- Experiment to discover self, gain independence, and gain control over one's life;
- Develop significant positive relationships with peers and at least one adult;
- Discuss conflicting values and form one's own;
- Feel pride of competence and mastery;
- Expand one's capacity to enjoy life and know that success is possible.

Though PCTV staff, youth participants, parents, and other involved adults did not always use the same language as in this list, the evaluation revealed that each of these needs is being met in one way or another.

Staff members are consistent and have been actively molding the program for years. At the center of their success is the opportunity for youth to take ownership of the program and its products. Youth guide productions from conception to completion and are allowed to pursue and enhance their interests. The program accomplishes this by providing an accessible and safe environment, giving youth a place to experience positive peer relations, facilitating a sense of belonging to a peer group, and offering opportunities to partake in meaningful work. The program is free and provides transportation to and from PCTV.

Program Impacts

It became evident from evaluation data that media technology draws youth in and provides an outlet for pursuing personal interests; it is at the center of everything that happens at PCTV. For many youth, PCTV provided a first experience with success. Youth are also able to explore themselves in relationship to others. They connect with people they have never before encountered, and thus are gaining new ways of viewing themselves and their world. Youth who have been engaged in this process on a regular basis for an extended period of time have notable changes in several program objective areas. Interviewees described outcomes in the following areas:

Positive Character Development

For many youth, the PCTV experience builds self-confidence, encourages self-exploration, and fosters group membership and the sense of belong to a group. With enhanced self-confidence, this experience has bridged other social opportunities for youth.

Developing Public Mindedness

Through meaningful work, young people begin to discover a sense of purpose. They begin to understand how they can share their interests and views and how messages can

influence others. Being involved in issues of relevance to them changes their perspective on the world and their role in it.

Decreased Delinquent Behavior

Three PCTV youth participants experienced a noted decrease in their violent behavior. There are indications that PCTV played a role in this transformation. The safe environment has allowed them to experiment with other aspects of their individual beings—particularly achiever and one that engages in positive interactions. They feel differently about themselves and thus were prompted to learn new ways to deal with their emotional and physical outbursts.

Influence on School Participation

Several PCTV participants attend an alternative school. Overall these students have had better attendance, higher school retention rates, increased technological competencies, and leadership development. While not as many data were available about the PCTV students from mainstream schools, their attitudes about school have improved and they reported feeling a new sense of possibility. By experiencing positive achievement at PCTV, students who had previously felt like failures at school had more confidence to pursue classes and extracurricular activities with newfound enthusiasm.

Increased Technical Knowledge and Skills

Youth participants have acquired technical skills in the field of media arts, learned to use teamwork to accomplish productions, and gained access to equipment and new situations that enabled them to engage in real work.

Increased Community Opportunities.

At PCTV, young people discover a bridge that leads to experiencing community in new ways—different connections to school, new job possibilities, expanded education and career goals, relationships with new people, media exposure and recognition, and opened doors to future possibilities.

Conclusion

In summary, PCTV has done an outstanding job of drawing youth to its program and engaging them in media work that is real and follows positive youth development practices. The meaningful and productive work engages young people and successfully encourages long-term involvement. The long-term involvement increases the possibility that the program will have impact. Youth have experienced positive changes in their lives and have broadened their worlds through what they have learned, been exposed to, and connected with through their PCTV participation.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	6
PHILLIPS COMMUNITY TELEVISION: PROGRAM OVERVIEW	6
<i>PCTV Program Theory</i>	6
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	7
<i>Data Collection</i>	7
SECTION I: THE PARTICIPANTS.....	9
PROGRAM DEMOGRAPHICS.....	9
<i>Table 1: Gender Representation</i>	9
<i>Table 2: Race/Ethnicity Representation</i>	9
YOUTH PROFILES.....	10
<i>Risk Factors</i>	10
<i>Time Use Prior to PCTV Involvement</i>	10
<i>How Heard about PCTV</i>	12
<i>Family Involvement</i>	12
<i>Long-Term Involvement</i>	12
SECTION II: THE PCTV ENVIRONMENT	13
ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY	14
POSITIVE PEER RELATIONS AND SENSE OF BELONGING TO A GROUP	15
MEANINGFUL WORK	15
SECTION III: IMPACT OF EXPERIENCE ON YOUNG PEOPLE’S LIVES.....	16
POSITIVE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT	17
<i>Confidence Building</i>	17
<i>Self-Exploration</i>	18
<i>Group Membership and Belonging</i>	19
DEVELOPING PUBLIC MINDEDNESS	23
DECREASED DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR.....	26
INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL PARTICIPATION	28
<i>Alternative School Students</i>	28
<i>Mainstream School Students</i>	31
INCREASED TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS.....	33
<i>Acquisition of Technical Skills</i>	33
<i>Teamwork</i>	34
<i>Access to Meaningful, Real Work</i>	34
INCREASED COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES	36
<i>Different Connections to School</i>	36
<i>Connections to Jobs</i>	36
<i>Connections to Education and Career Goals</i>	36
<i>Connections to New People</i>	36
<i>Exposure and Recognition</i>	37
<i>Doors Wide Open</i>	37
CONCLUSION	39

Introduction

Phillips Community Television: Program Overview

Phillips Community Television (PCTV) is a Minneapolis community-based non-profit organization dedicated to empowering youth and communities through media literacy education, media production, and public service. Since its inception in 1992, PCTV has enabled inner-city youth, ages 9-18, to create their own television programs, magazines, photography exhibits, Web pages, and personal projects focusing on youth, family, and community issues. The PCTV staff implements four programs throughout the year:

1. **Our Turn** is a TV magazine show by and for youth. PCTV participants do everything from the selection of the show topic to camera and editing.
2. **Mixed Visions** is an online gallery of youth-produced Web design, photography, and creative writing.
3. **Indy** is short for “independent study projects.” This is an after-school program where youth produce personal independent media projects that are videos, photography, or Web designs.
4. **AVID!** stands for Audio Visual Investigations of Democracy. This summertime program gives teens opportunities to produce videos that explore important social issues in their community and their lives.

PCTV’s primary programming is an after-school program during the school year (September through mid-June). Youth are recruited from local schools and from friends of current participants. Each program operates on separate days and youth choose which days to participate according to their programs interests. Many youth participate up to three days per week in the Our Turn program. Many of these youth also come additional days to participate in Mixed Visions and Indy. The AVID! program runs primarily during the summer months and some school-year youth continue during the summer to work on AVID! Projects. The summer program primarily engages a different group of youth than the school-year program. Some of the summer youth choose PCTV as a work site through a summer youth employment program operated by the city of Minneapolis. They work for eight to ten weeks and are paid for their participation. Approximately ten teens work in two small groups on AVID! projects. The purpose of the summer program is to give more youth the PCTV experience, provide meaningful work during the summer months, and ultimately recruit new youth to participate in the school-year program.

PCTV Program Theory

According to staff members, obtaining media skills and knowledge is a method of providing youth with new and positive experiences that will impact the way they view themselves and others. By having opportunities to take their original ideas from conception to final media products youth are able to achieve goals, feel good about themselves and their abilities, experience productive teamwork, and learn about topics and issues that are relevant to their lives. Staff members believe that youth enter the

program with a variety of life experiences and with pre-constructed perceptions about themselves and others, and about how they relate to individuals and communities. They are drawn to PCTV by the exciting prospects of media. PCTV is able to keep youth actively engaged through the meaningful activities the program offers. Most are able to “find a niche” in the media and technology processes and are encouraged to flourish. They are allowed to manifest their ideas by creating actual media productions. When youth participate regularly they can realize the opportunity to achieve in ways they have not experienced before. They connect with themselves and others in new ways that expand their views of themselves and their world consisting of families, peers, and other adults in school, work, extracurricular activities, and community.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluator met extensively with PCTV staff during the spring of 2004 to gain an in-depth understanding of their program theory and what would be most relevant, meaningful, and useful to further examine. The evaluator also began meeting informally with PCTV youth to establish rapport and trust and to explain the evaluation and why they were going to be interviewed. In addition, the evaluator made initial home visits to parents to explain the evaluation project and to obtain their consent for their children and themselves to participate. Data collection began in the summer of 2004. Both summer employment teams participated in a focus group at the end of the summer. Since their reasons for being in PCTV were primarily monetary and their experience was mainly thought of “as a job,” their responses were limited and are not included in the evaluation findings. Interviews with school-year participants, parents, and other significant adults occurred between September 2004 and July 2005.

Data Collection

A total of 15 youth and eight adults were interviewed either individually or in small groups. PCTV staff and the evaluator carefully selected a purposive sample to ensure that both new and returning participants were interviewed and that they represented a balance of males and females and youth from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds. Of course, it was also important that youth agree to participate in the interview process. Four of the 15 youth were selected for more extensive interviewing. These youth were interviewed during the fall of 2004 and again during the spring of 2005. Each of the four chose two adults to be interviewed about their impressions of the youth’s participation. Three parents and five other adults including a principal, a teacher, a social worker, a photographer, and an employment counselor were individually interviewed during the winter of 2005.

Two small groups of youth were identified and interviewed. One group consisted of three youth who had at least a year of experience in the program. The second group consisted of four youth who were new to the program. The intent was to conduct a group interview with each of these groups three times throughout the year. This did happen in the fall quarter, but in the winter quarter only one group of seven youth new to the program was interviewed. Only three of the seven had participated in the fall group. Not as much relevant information was elicited from the winter discussion group as had been

from the fall groups, therefore it was determined that individual interviews would yield more data. Three youth from “new participant” focus group were selected to be individually interviewed during the spring of 2005. No more focus groups were conducted.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both groups and individuals. The evaluator clearly wanted to collect information about the program objectives, but did not want them to guide the flow of the interview. Therefore, youth were allowed to discuss what they felt was most important to share about their PCTV experience and personal lives.

In all interviews, youth were asked to describe why they participated in PCTV, what interested them enough to initiate that first visit to PCTV, and ultimately what kept them involved. Inquiries were also made about how they spend the rest of their out-of-school time and what other things were important in their lives. They were also asked about the process of media production and the topics they chose to explore in their shows. Of course, those who had individual interviews revealed more about themselves than those who spoke in small groups. Parents were asked about their children’s involvement in PCTV, the role PCTV has played in their children’s lives, how their children spend their out-of-school time, about their children’s relationships with friends, how their children view themselves, and about their children’s school experiences. Other adults were asked about their relationships with the young people and questions similar to those asked of parents.

All interviews were transcribed and basic content analysis was conducted during the fall of 2005. To best describe the evaluation findings they have been divided into the following sections:

Evaluation Findings

Section 1: The Participants

Section 2: The PCTV Environment

Section 3: Impact of Experience on Participants’ Lives

Section I: The Participants

Program Demographics

Seventy-eight young people participated in the PCTV afterschool program during the 2004 – 2005 school year. Nineteen percent (15 youth) of total participants had their experiences captured through individual and group interviews. As the table shows, those interviewed exhibited a fair representation of the total population. Forty percent of those interviewed were male (compared with 43% of total participants) and 60% of those interviewed were female (compared with 56% of total participants). While the racial/ethnicity numbers are not as balanced as the gender, at least one participant from each racial category was interviewed. As the following chart shows, the percentages of African Americans, Native Americans, and Chicanos/Latinos interviewed were fairly close to the percentages of youth participants. To the extremes, African youth were highly represented in this study while the remaining groups, Multi Racial and European youth, were perhaps underrepresented.²

Table 1: Gender Representation

Gender	Total Program Participants		Youth Interviewed	
	% of Total	# of Youth	% of Total	# of Youth
Males	43%	34	40%	6
Females	56%	44	60%	9

Table 2: Race/Ethnicity Representation

Race/Ethnicity	Total Program Participants		Youth Interviewed	
	% of Total	# of Youth	% of Youth	# of Youth
African American	43%	(34 youth)	40%	(6 youth)
Multi Racial	17%	(13 youth)	7%	(1 youth)
European	13%	(10 youth)	7%	(1 youth)
African	11%	(9 youth)	26%	(4 youth)
Chicano/Latino	10%	(8 youth)	13%	(2 youth)
Native American	1%	(1 youth)	7%	(1 youth)
Totals		78 Youth		15 Youth

² Percentages are rounded.

Youth Profiles

In addition to representing a good gender and a fair racial/ethnic cross-section of all PCTV program participants, interviewees were almost equally divided between “old” and “new” participants. Eight of the youth were new to the program in the fall of 2004. Seven had past experience in the program ranging from one to three years.

All interviewed youth live in the inner city of Minneapolis. According to information revealed during interviews, most came from families that would be considered low to low-middle income.³ At the time of the interviews, all were attending Minneapolis Public Schools. Twelve were enrolled at mainstream schools and three were enrolled at an alternative high school.

Risk Factors

Youth, parents, and other adults interviewed discussed difficult situations in the young people’s lives. In traditional youth development practices these situations are considered risk factors. Interviewed youth engaged in or experienced at least one or more of the described situations at some point during their lives. They have been categorized as the following risks factors:

- Truancy
- Poor attitude about and/or behavior in school
- Violent behavior
- Absence of extracurricular activities
- Friends that use drugs, alcohol, and/or engage in criminal behavior
- Live in high crime neighborhoods
- Access to positive support from parents or other adults
- Carry weapons for protection
- Mental health issues

Time Use Prior to PCTV Involvement

It is very difficult to discern whether these participants would have found similar media programs or other positive youth development initiatives elsewhere. No one interviewed knew of any media opportunities that were available for this population, with the exception of school photography or technology classes or a very expensive media camp during the summer. What is clear, according to those interviewed, is most youth were not engaged in positive youth endeavors. According to parents and youth, the programs they had experimented when they were younger were narrowly focused and subsequently they became bored. As one parent stated:

The fact that each week PCTV is a different issue or topic and it just gets her involved...picking their brains about what’s going on in the community or whatever, as opposed to any other after-school activity, where it would not be stimulating her mind. Whereas PCTV, it is getting them to think about the

³ No official data about income levels were available.

community and different aspects like that, like interviewing people. Whereas, if she went some place else it would be just soccer, and that's it. It would be very narrow, whereas with PCTV, they're doing candy, or teen pregnancy, a variety of topics that, I'm like, "Oh, I never thought about that...." It keeps her going, the fact that the subject matter constantly changes.

When this parent was asked if her daughter had been involved in a lot of after-school programs she replied:

Yeah! But when she got to a certain age, about eight, nine, or ten, she was just like, "No, I've done that. I don't want to do that!" And I'm like, "Well, you have to do something!" She went for about two years without doing any after-school activities.

This was true for many of the youth. For youth who spoke about after-school activities, their involvement was stronger when they were in elementary grades. Most were not involved in any activities when they joined PCTV. Current research conducted by the Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time cited the main reasons youth do not participate as lack of interest in what programs have to offer, youth's lack of self-confidence, program cost and transportation, and lack of friend or peer involvement.⁴

PCTV is unique because it focuses on media and technology which entices teenaged youth to get involved. Youth are offered a variety of opportunities that keep them interested and engaged. They may participate for no cost up to five days per week until they finish high school, and transportation is provided. In addition, it is known that for some youth, PCTV was a catalyst to other activities as described in Positive Character Development.

At the time of the interviews, youth reflected on how they spent their out-of-school time before joining PCTV. One entrepreneurial youth was always busy trying to earn money to support himself and often sold products door to door. Most, however, described hanging out with friends, at school, at the park, at each other's homes, or sometimes at the mall. For some, after-school time meant spending time alone, usually at home, playing video games and/or watching television, writing poetry, or making music. This is not unusual for how non-engaged young people are spending their time. According to another study conducted by researchers at the University of Illinois, young people are spending their free time watching television, talking with family and/or friends, and playing (includes computer and video games).⁵ According to the authors of this study, it appears that a large percentage of free time is spent on what one may call "unconstructive" use of time. They go on to say that comprehensive, longitudinal studies show that how kids use their free time makes a big difference in their immediate learning

⁴Jaskin Baker, A. and D. Moen. 2004. Youth-on-youth: Youth-conducted field interviews with non-participants in out-of-school time opportunities. Briefing paper, Minnesota Commission on Out-Of-School Time.

⁵ Minnesota Commission on Out-Of-School Time. 2004. What are young people doing with their time? Briefing Paper, author.

and development and, in turn, makes a difference in their long-term developmental outcomes.

How Heard about PCTV

The majority of youth heard about the PCTV program at school from PCTV staff members who visited their lunchrooms or taught a class at the school, and/or from their friends. One youth heard about it from his sisters and another resourceful youth saw the Our Turn show on television and called the number on the screen to find out more.

Family Involvement

Many of the interviewed youth said their parents told them they needed to find something to do but did not necessarily help them find “that thing.” Parents interviewed knew about their children’s involvement in PCTV and had seen a few shows. Most had visited PCTV, but most only once, either for a screening, open house, or to talk with staff. Most parents had seen a couple of shows or a video their children were involved in, but most did not know a great deal about what their children had done. They seem to talk to their children on a limited basis about their involvement; some even took a back seat approach, not paying much attention unless they heard something was wrong. At least two parents reflected on their own life experience and felt strongly that their lives have been tough. They felt that their lives would have been more positive if they had PCTV as young people. For several families, their children are the first in the family to accomplish something like this.

Long-Term Involvement

Some youth joined PCTV because they wanted the perceived glamour and exposure of being on television, some were excited about being involved in media, some wanted to learn technology, some just wanted something to do with their friends, and one simply wanted to “get his hands on that camera” that he saw his friend with. Regardless what sparked their interest, these youth found much more at PCTV. The next section describes the PCTV environment, which was so crucial for not only getting youth involved but keeping them involved long enough for the program to impact their lives.

Section II: The PCTV Environment

It is important to describe the environment in which program outcomes occurred. Without this context, the outcomes lack meaning. PCTV has created an environment that helps fulfill many of young people's developmental needs as described originally by Gisella Knopka and more recently by Karen Pittman and others:⁶

- Feel a sense of safety and structure;
- Experience active participation, group membership, and belonging;
- Develop self-worth through meaningful contribution;
- Experiment to discover self, gain independence, and gain control over one's life;
- Develop significant positive relationships with peers and at least one adult;
- Discuss conflicting values and form one's own;
- Feel pride of competence and mastery;
- Expand one's capacity to enjoy life and know that success is possible.

PCTV is inviting to young people because the atmosphere fosters social interactions with peers and adults and encourages meaningful work. In short, teens like to be at PCTV because it is a safe place where they can have fun with their peers, and engage positively with adults, and it offers exposure to media and technology. None of the people interviewed, youth or adults, could identify another place or program that offers what PCTV offers. Parents find it very important that the program provides a safe environment that gives their children something meaningful to do and opportunities to be productive. Phillips Community Television is able to break through the barriers previously noted that often keep youth from participating in after-school programs.

Using media as a vehicle for engaging youth has proven effective. Youth were drawn to media for a variety of reasons. For some it was the obvious: they were interested in technology. The opportunity to learn more about computers, cameras, editing, and so on, and to have access to that equipment was a large part of the appeal. For many, especially the females interviewed, there was the glamour of television. The idea of getting camera attention and being recognized was a powerful emotional draw. For some it was a chance to build upon other interests, though they likely did not consciously realize this until they were involved. Some youth were writers, drawers, clothing designers, or musicians. Some practiced their arts only in the privacy of their homes. Fewer were openly pursuing their dreams. Perhaps on a sub-conscious level they saw the potential to further explore their craft, but more likely they just saw it as an opportunity to do something interesting.

⁶ Adapted by the Minnesota Youth Work Institute from Konopka, G. 1973. "Requirements for healthy development of adolescent youth." *Adolescence*, 8 (31), 2 – 25, and Pittman, K. J. and M. Wright. 1999. *A Rationale for Enhancing the Role of the Non-School Voluntary Sector in Youth Development* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research).

For most, it was plain and simple: They didn't have anything or much to do after school, they heard about what their friends were doing at PCTV, and they decided to give it a try.

The staff members have done an outstanding job creating a welcoming and stimulating environment for youth at PCTV. John Gwinn founded the program in 1992, and has acted as the Program Director ever since. Michael Hay, the Youth Programs Manager, has worked at PCTV for more than five years. The longevity of these two primary staff people has given the program consistency. One important aspect of this program is that youth can participate as many days per week as they like and can continue to be involved until they have completed high school. This gives youth the opportunity to flourish in ways more short-term programs do not provide. This, according to numerous studies including the Out-of-School Time report from the University of Minnesota, is important for successful programming.⁷ According to the report:

Children and youth involved in high-quality youth development activities have critical opportunities to make choices about what to do with their time, with whom to engage, and how to practice social, cognitive, and other skills. This doesn't happen once in a while in an activity randomly planned and staff; it happens over time when positive experiences and relationships are nurtured and sustained. It happens when the adults involved help the young people develop competences, find meaning in their lives, and build a foundation for adult thinking and behaviors.

First, staff members have created an open and safe environment. Second, they have created a setting in which youth can be with peers with whom they feel comfortable and feel a sense of belonging to a group. Finally, they have created an environment where meaningful work is encouraged and produced.

Accessibility and Safety

PCTV is ultimately a place where youth go to enjoy themselves. Many of the interviewed youth previously had limited extracurricular activities. Youth said there really were not too many after-school options for them. They were not interested in what their schools had to offer and did not feel comfortable in the after-school environment. In addition, the costs of some programs, particularly media related, were inhibiting. PCTV provides free high-quality programming. Youth are able to have fun at PCTV because they feel safe and respected there. Parents and youth alike expressed the need for a safe place for youth to spend their out-of-school time. Due to family situations and the dangerous neighborhoods that youth live in, providing free transportation to and from the program is of utmost importance to both youth and parents. Parents talked about the fear they had for their children hanging out in their neighborhoods and youth spoke about getting into conflicts with people in public places such as the park and local fitness center. It is expected that staff and youth at PCTV treat each other with respect. Youth

⁷ Minnesota Commission on Out-Of-School time. 2005. *Journeys into Community: Transforming Youth Opportunities for Learning and Development*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

expressed the importance of this and said they had not experienced that kind of respect in other settings, particularly from the staff, but also from peers.

Positive Peer Relations and Sense of Belonging to a Group

PCTV is a community built on respect and that is how youth are able to further experience positive peer relations and gain a sense of belonging. Youth feel a part of a community of peers at PCTV. For many this strong connection is what keeps them coming. Even though most youth first came to PCTV with friends, they were not dependent on those friends for long. They quickly became comfortable with the wider PCTV community. As with the lack of respect in other settings, many of these youth also did not have positive, productive peer groups. Many had limited friendships and a lot of people they described as “associates.” Associates are people you know, but do not get close to. Most had one or two close friends. With these close friends they mostly hung out at each other’s homes or in public places. In part, geography plays a role in youth’s limited friendships. They may meet people at school but not see them out of school because they live in different neighborhoods. PCTV fosters peer relationship development. Youth are able to see each other on a regular, consistent basis and expand their peer experiences within the safety of PCTV. The supportive community that PCTV has created allows peers to learn with and from one another and engage in productive work that is meaningful to them.

Meaningful Work

PCTV programming offers productive experiences that are meaningful to young people. Youth are able to test out ideas and explore their personal lives in a safe format. Through free-choice learning youth are allowed to dedicate their time to areas of media production that most interest them. It gives them the opportunity to expand on personal qualities they came with like drawing, music, writing, computers, and media technology. Youth are allowed to do this individually and in groups.

None of this would happen without youth having ownership in the program. All of the aspects of environment discussed thus far have youth ownership at the center. Youth ownership happens in a cyclical pattern. The PCTV environment is geared toward promoting and emphasizing youth ownership of their projects. In turn, by allowing youth a voice in PCTV programming, the program stays focused on young people.

The PCTV environment keeps many youth engaged over a long period of time. Youth who were interviewed participated for one to three years. This is a significant factor for creating change in a young person’s life. The next section describes how this environment has had an impact on youth with regard to PCTV program objectives.

Section III: Impact of Experience on Young People's Lives

Phillips Community Television has created and sustained an environment that meets multiple needs of the youth participants. The following section focuses on the impacts PCTV has had on those young people. Past evaluations provided evidence that youth gained technical skills and knowledge, therefore this evaluation did not focus on the technical gains but rather on the *meaning* of that experience. It became evident that media and technology draws youth in and provides an outlet for pursuing personal interests; it is the impetus for everything else that happens at PCTV. By learning and applying technical skills and knowledge, PCTV participants are provided opportunities to engage in meaningful, purposeful work and the chance to be successful at something, for the first time, for many. They are able to explore themselves in relationship to others. They connect with people they have never had the opportunity to connect with before and thus are gaining new ways of viewing themselves and their world. Youth who have been engaged in this process on a regular basis for an extended period of time have experienced notable changes in several program objective areas. To best describe the impacts as they pertain to the PCTV program outcomes funded by the Minnesota Office Of Justice Programs funding, this section is divided into the following five areas of impact:

- ❖ Positive Character Development
- ❖ Developing Public Mindedness
- ❖ Decreased Delinquent Behavior
- ❖ Influence on School Participation
- ❖ Increased Technical Knowledge and Skills
- ❖ Increased Community Opportunities

Positive Character Development

Clearly PCTV contributes to the positive development of young people: The youth who participate are seeking and finding a community in which they are valued; PCTV develops their confidence by making them feel appreciated as valuable members of their community; and they are engaged in meaningful work throughout the process of media production from conception to completion of a project.

Most youth interviewed for this evaluation had not previously experienced such accomplishment. Many had few or no past experiences being successful or feeling special. One staff person at an alternative school noted that that once a youth experiences success they continue to seek it out, something PCTV facilitates and encourages:

It's not the cause, but it was an important factor for some of the students in staying in school, staying safe, having hope. They were involved in something that really was positive and defining for them, and that they felt was unique to them too and set them off as special. When you get to be on television, it's easy to call yourself special.⁸

This school faculty person went on to say that for two students, PCTV “*was the most important [aspect of their lives] that I can think about.*”

The positive development that was most notable in the interviews included:

- Confidence Building
- Self-Exploration
- Social Development

Confidence Building

The most evident aspect of character development in the PCTV program is self-confidence. Many of the young people involved had never before had the opportunity to achieve. Yet they report that even prior to completion of a project, they felt like others at PCTV, both staff and peers, believed in them. This began to influence how they acted and how they felt, as one youth described:

When I started hanging around people that I felt comfortable around [at PCTV], it taught me how to be more open and that your ideas aren't dumb. If you're around your friends, you can tell them your ideas and they won't call it dumb. In school you're not really comfortable with the whole class and sometimes you just don't want to speak out.

One youth who attends a mainstream public high school described how she used to feel and act “stupid” at school because no one there had faith in her. She also said that after a year of almost daily participation in PCTV and of being part of the team producing the

⁸ Quotes may be edited for clarity and to ensure confidentiality.

Our Turn show, “*I just, like, realized that I am not stupid and I actually can try my best if I actually, like, do it!*” Once young people have this initial positive experience it helps to build their confidence. When they are praised for their efforts they are likely to continue on with more promise about what they are capable of achieving.

I used to think about “Oh, I’m good for nothing” and I didn’t succeed. [I was doing editing] right after I came and another student was like, “You’re good at it!” They believed in me and it gave me hope! So, now I’m trying to be good at... now I believe in myself. I used to be camera shy. I never went in front of the camera in my life. I used to make my home videos with my cousins and stuff, but I never went in front of the camera. But now this last time, this month, I was the host of the show. I never thought I’d do that in my life, but now I just did it!

Given that the program is long-term for many, youth are learning and gaining lasting personal collections of skills and knowledge. This further instills pride and enhances self-esteem that leads to a more confident being. They not only have this portfolio of abilities that they are praised for by PCTV staff and fellow participants, they also are able to teach and/or share their skills and knowledge with others. For some this is done within the PCTV setting by becoming senior producers and/or at school where they have been able to share what they know in a technology class or extracurricular activity such as yearbook design.

The ultimate confidence builder is positive public exposure. Several youth spoke about receiving positive feedback in public by someone who has seen them on television:

I was riding the bus one time and I heard people in the back talking, they were like, “That girls on T.V!” I got, like, this big huge grin on my face. I just heard them talking and before, like people at school, they’re like, “Hey, I saw you on T.V!” And they’re like, “you did great!” And I’m like, “Thank you!”

Public exposure also creates opportunities for others, such as peers or family members, to see what they are actually capable of achieving:

They [my family] like it when they watch the shows, like when I produce a segment or something. They’re like, “Oh, my God, that’s so nice! I’m proud of you!” They like it!

Self-Exploration

Youth tend to grow up in PCTV. Most start in middle school and those who are hooked stay well into high school. This is naturally a period of growth and development, and PCTV helps make it a positive one in which there are plenty of opportunities for self-exploration. Through this, participants gain self-awareness that they use in other aspects of their lives. One youth tried to articulate the process on a personal level:

It was just me who was just worrying about messing up and looking embarrassed. I was still kinda on that stage. You know, I wouldn’t wanna, like, come out of

character. It's kinda hard to explain. I was trying to be this other character. I was trying to be this other side of me, with my actual glasses, my prescription glasses I had. You know, I had my shirt buttoned up, tucked in.... But you can watch from the steps of the videos that I did, and you can see how much my character changed, as far as media-wise, you know. I'm still the same me on the streets, you know, but I don't know, I'm just growing up.

Youth also have opportunities to play different roles. Some have become leaders and had the chance to explore that realm; some also described being able to play roles that they do not always get to play around their peers in other settings. These include being productive, being creative, being part of a team, showing interest in teen subjects, and being optimistic.

Youth are allowed to experiment in a variety of ways, including exploring different aspects of their personalities in a safe place as previously described. Second, they have opportunities to express themselves in positive ways by producing media pieces that are of interest to them and have meaning in their lives. One young woman wanted, for example, to do a show about a very emotional personal family situation. She decided that being too forthright might be difficult. *"I didn't want to stir up past feelings in my family because it was such a hard time,"* she recalled. *"I changed to a narrative, but I didn't want to leave myself out of it because I wanted to have me and my brother play into it."* She chose to write a story about three girls who all had experienced a turbulent past event. The film showed these girls getting drunk as a way of lowering their inhibitions in order to communicate their circumstances and feelings. The film uses flashbacks to illustrate each situation. Making this film provided the young creator the opportunity to take an artistic approach to dealing with a delicate and painful element of her life.

Youth begin to understand through their media work that it's okay to try hard, to do something meaningful, and to be themselves. Many youth were discovering their personal strengths and weaknesses, and realizing that having both is okay. This was obviously easiest in the context of media production, but for some it extended into their personal lives. For one youth who struggles with mental health issues, PCTV kept her connected to the world in meaningful ways. One adult who knows her speculated that without PCTV this youth's world would likely have become smaller and more isolated. This young person gained insights about her personal moods and was learning more positive approaches for dealing with them.

Group Membership and Belonging

For most teenaged youth being accepted by peers or "fitting in" with a group is one of the most important aspects of life. Figuring out *where* they fit in is also among the highest sources of stress for teenagers. PCTV provided that place for many who lacked it.

While some youth came to PCTV because they heard about it from a PCTV staff person who was recruiting at their school, more often they heard about it from peers. While having a peer to go with to something new greatly increases initial comfort level, comfort was quickly established for most at PCTV. For example, two young women came

because a friend brought them. Their friend stopped participating shortly thereafter, but the young women felt comfortable enough to stay. Another person said that one of the most important things that happened during their first quarter at PCTV was discovering how easy it was to talk to people: “*It was really easy just to talk to people. The first day I just started talking to people.*” Making a positive connection was important to most of the youth interviewed, this participant articulated as much:

I like the people here. I like their attitudes and their personalities. They're really nice and I really don't get out of the house and see nice people like that...Positive attitudes, because, like, everywhere else that I go everybody is, like, negative and I really don't like that, so I just like to be here. 'Cause usually the people I hang around, they have bad attitudes and they don't like school and they get in trouble with the law and all that! So, I just came here and these kids they don't get in trouble with law because they're here instead of out on the streets getting in trouble.

At PCTV connecting with peers included engaging in meaningful work together. There was one young woman who said she preferred to work on her own, but even she commented:

With a group, in a way, it's easier to think of a topic because you're getting more input. If I'm just trying to figure out something to do for, like, by myself, it's harder to think of something to do.

In this setting, social development included learning social skills and becoming more socially confident. Without the connection to peers and the opportunity to be productive together, substantially less social development would have occurred. In fact, youth said that without it they would not have continued to participate in the PCTV program.

Social Skills

One of the primary social skills that youth reportedly obtained was communicating in a respectful way. Youth were respected from the moment they entered the program and others listened to them without being too critical. Because of this they found it easier to reciprocate, to listen to others without being too critical. The respect they received at PCTV made them more willing to give it back to others. Youth learned how to communicate effectively amongst themselves and, ultimately, when speaking to non-participants, such as people they were interviewing.

Another social skill learned was teamwork. Participants talked about all phases of production and how they needed to work as a team through each phase in order for their efforts to be successful. Teamwork definitely included respect and communication, but also assigning tasks, recognizing strengths and weaknesses of self and others, allowing others to flourish, and keeping production moving forward. Working as a team was not without challenges. Youth described situations that caused some to work extra hours to complete projects because others had not finished their work on time. Staff members

guided youth through consensus building and reflective practices to help prevent future conflicts.

Learning teamwork produced leaders. Some youth went on to explore leadership with peers outside of the PCTV environment. One youth described her experience of guiding her friends outside of PCTV through a media production:

The hardest part was scheduling for me and my friends; to actually get together and do it, and for them to stay there and do, like, take after take after take. I know it was kind of hard for them for me to be real bossy to them, but I, like, had to do it. I had to get the shots that I wanted each time I turned the camera on.

Social Confidence

Phillips Community Television participants also spoke about feeling more confident socially because they found a place they fit in. By participating in PCTV, youths' social networks were broadened and social comfort levels expanded. Parents noted this as well; one parent said:

I've just noticed over time how she's interacting with the kids there. So, it's broadening her base of two or three friends. Her social interaction has broadened because of that.

For at least two youth this was life changing. One described herself as not being social, not knowing how to approach someone, and not communicating well with people. She said PCTV gave her a technical skill that has made her feel good about herself and that has been a bridge for her to other people. Her mother also noted the profound changes:

I think it's blossoming her and opening her up a little more, because she was self-conscious about herself. I think it has helped her socially. I think it made her work harder and better. She's learned responsibility. The things that she's learned in PCTV, it may not be big to some people, but it's big to her, being able to open up, being able to work with people. You can't go through life not being able to work with anybody, because you have to be able to get along with somebody. I think it helped her a lot.

Ironically, this youth initially used PCTV as an excuse to not have a social life. If invited to something, she would say she needed to be at PCTV. She claimed part of this was her strong commitment to the program. After some prodding, however, she revealed that it was also a safety net: *"Sometimes I think I was too scared to do it. I think because the fear held me back from going to parties and other things like that."* Now she reports engaging in social activities outside of PCTV and feeling more comfortable around peers in other settings.

PCTV acted as a social bridge for another participant as well. This person had been in the same school for grades K–8 and had a couple of close friends. When he found out he had to go to a high school where none of his friends were going he was devastated. He

was fighting fervently against attending the new school, while his family was encouraging him to give it a try. His family was very worried; his mom was concerned that her son would not get involved in the new school, would bring home bad grades, would be truant, and would maybe even run away from home. She attributed the more positive course her child chose to his participation in PCTV: *“[He] learned how to develop and sustain interpersonal relationships. [He] might have found something once he started high school maybe, but I don’t think he would have been open to it. This [PCTV] is like a bridge for him to make that leap to high school.”* This student ended up doing okay at the new school; he got involved in extra curricular activities, completed his freshman year, and returned there the next fall.

Developing Public Mindedness

Through meaningful work, youth begin to discover a sense of purpose. For these young people, work is meaningful when it is relevant to their lives. At PCTV they explore topics and mediums that are of interest to them, and their work becomes useful when they are able to share a message with other youth. By doing this they begin to learn about the impact they can have in their communities and, through television, the public at large. The process entails exploring compelling teen topics, educating other youth, connecting to teens doing similar work, and having their voices heard. Going through this exposes them to new people, situations, and ideas, and it impacts their perspectives on the world and their roles in it.

An adult who knows the youth who produced Battleground Minnesota, a video about why young people in Minnesota, a swing state, should care about politics during the 2005 presidential campaign, described the impact as mainly positive, with the caveat that the time commitment was significant:

I think when we first started out it was sort of this fun after school activity and that's when he did the cable TV and he had fun interviewing people and using the equipment and then it seems like he got a lot more serious about it, but it was a big commitment in his life. He always went there after school and, like I said, before I think that it sort of did interfere because that's a lot. People usually go to jobs right after school, so I think he made the commitment to stick with it and he just wanted to learn as much about producing videos, everything behind the camera and then when Battleground came out, he was just so in to it...I have pictures of him up there with his November 2nd t-shirt on, they came in and they were running around town that day handing out t-shirts...I think they were handing out the DVD and he just became so politically involved, because of that video. He was just trying to get everybody in school that was eighteen years or older to vote and he came in here to drop off a shirt for me and people here had seen the video and they're like, "Oh, there's the kid from the video..." and he's like, "Did you vote? Did you vote?" He did not care about the video that day; he just wanted to make sure people were voting. So, I think because of his involvement with PCTV and that video he's grown a lot.

This growth begins with being allowed to expand on personal interests. Producing media gives youth an avenue for exploring teen situations they are close to, and for positively interacting with other youth about those situations. All of the Our Turn productions and many of the Indy productions are done in groups. By exploring issues that are important to them youth expand their knowledge about the topics and meet people and visit places that are new to them. This impressed one parent:

She had to go down to the Red Door and interview people and get some real statistics on STD's and things of that nature...I think that had blown her mind.

Youth are also interacting with one another about sensitive topics in ways they may not have otherwise. By raising their own personal awareness, youth can have an impact on their peers. One teen reflected on this:

When they work on those [topics] and they have to research their topics, like teen pregnancy and stuff like that, they learn more and they get more involved and stuff. After that, you can't really ignore that kind of stuff.

One PCTV youth was talking about a story she wanted to tell about young people drinking alcohol at parties. She feels it's really sad that some youth feel they have to drink to have a good time. By producing a video on the subject she hopes to shed a new light on the subject and provide other youth with knowledge: *"Whatever we're doing the topic on, that it's really important for people to realize this stuff. Better educate them about it."* This same youth feels proud about what she is contributing. She goes on to say, *"I know some of my friends and family, like my cousins, they watch the show and they actually like learn from the [Our Turn] show."*

Exposing PCTV youth to people, situations, and information that they would not necessarily have been privileged to in the past gives them new perspective:

We found out that, like, a lot of teens didn't even know about politics or teens that were old enough hadn't voted. We had, like, people saying that it's not going to benefit them to vote. [They] said they didn't vote for a certain reason. I started really seeing that from, like, inner city kids. They feel like it wasn't important to vote, saying they ain't going to help them. Hopefully it [the video] did [help them]. I mean, we just basically gave them our knowledge of what was important about voting and stuff like that, back and forth feedback.

When producing something that is of importance to them, young people begin to feel a sense of obligation. As one teacher put it, *"I think that that obligation is solidified when it's publicly earned."* When a young person's message is aired publicly, it makes them accountable for their words and actions.

For one of the youth who worked on the renowned Battleground video this accountability was noted by one of the school personnel. This youth publicly stated a value that other youth should be involved in the political process, that they have a voice. He had to tell everybody that he was actively involved and engaged, an active citizen, so now he feels like he has to be. The faculty member described this youth:

I think he sees himself as an important part of the community and it's just sort of given him a life. And he's always saying how younger kids need to realize there's life [worth living] and know that they count and matter.

Producing media at PCTV provides an avenue for involvement that many youth have never experienced. Their voices are projected to a larger audience and youth begin to learn about the impact they can have. One parent succinctly articulated it:

I think the main thing is for kids to realize there is a whole community out there besides their own core group of friends and just having to interact with all that stuff...so, the community! And how...the role they play it...because it is their environment and where they live and everything else that they do have direct effect to it. Well, I mean, a lot of kids all they think about going out to the mall, and buying clothes and seeing what they're wearing...but there's a bigger picture and this is robbing their minds. I mean I remember they did a thing on bullying. It just lets them realize that there's more than just MTV. Like the thing about the teen pregnancy...yes, you know teen pregnancy has been done over and over again, but I think one thing that I think they realize is that there are consequences for your actions and the fact that if they would have had the same type of, or kid with the same class, you know, this PE or whatever, I don't think it would have made an impact as opposed to the subject matter that they picked in the program there at PCTV. I think they realize that there's more to life besides just going to the mall and hanging out.

Decreased Delinquent Behavior

Due to the population it attracts, PCTV appears more effective at delinquency *prevention* than delinquency intervention. Many youth were not plugged into any structured program prior to joining PCTV, so they had idle time on their hands and were primarily “hanging out” with friends. Both youth and parents were happy that these young people found something positive to do with their time that kept them “out of trouble.”

There are, however, a few indications that the program has positively impacted delinquent behavior in at least three of the participants interviewed. Violent behavior was a recurring problem for these youth. According to youth and adults interviewed, violent expressions by these youth decreased during their involvement in PCTV and they attribute this change in behavior in part to PCTV.

All three had histories of getting into violent fights in school and/or public places. One said he used to fight after school in public places such as the mall or park. He described a significant decrease in his fighting since getting involved with PCTV:

Well, in one school year, I think I fight, like, 30 or 40 times. But since PCTV it went to five or six.

This PCTV participant attributes this change to three things. First, because he participates in PCTV programming five days a week he has less time to hang out. Second, PCTV emits an air of respect, he said:

Well, here no one messing with each other, because they understand you...you just tell them like once...respect them; respect you...that's the thing! Like [other participant] knows me...you know I say “[other participant] do me a favor!” He does me a favor, I do him a favor, you know, he respects me and I respect him. [Staff member] respects you and you respect him the same! So, we don't have a problem.

Finally, this youth says that the staff helped him by giving him advice and that one staff member even gave his phone number to call whenever this youth was in an escalating, potentially violent situation.

Adults report changes as well. The principal at an alternative high school talked about one youth in particular who had displayed aggressive behavior prior to involvement in PCTV:

I can think of one student that was extremely violent. Fights all the time. We got this student involved—we encouraged PCTV, involved in rowing, involved in camping. So we did a lot of these sort of extracurricular activities. That student hasn't been in a fight in two years. PCTV is a place to have a positive experience in an extracurricular activity. And especially our

schools that are so small, we have to have places like that that will build these sorts of things. We don't have a support team. We don't have too many clubs or dances or things like that. So we rely on agencies for those.

The third story is a bit different. This youth was harassed a lot and continually needed to defend himself. His defenses were becoming more violent. This person made friends more easily with adults than with peers and had trouble fitting in. For him, PCTV was a safe haven where he was respected by both adults and peers:

I don't have to get along with anyone here, but I just do. You know, I feel comfortable with the people that's here.

This participant began to understand himself better and began to understand that when he was having a “little warped moment,” he needed to remove himself from a situation. Because he felt safe in the PCTV environment he was open to discovering his potential. He said he has learned a lot and has shared his knowledge with others. He feels better about himself and does not get into as many situations where he's inclined to deal with confrontations with violence.

The bottom line is that PCTV has provided these youth a safe environment to experiment with other aspects of their individual beings—those of achiever and one that engages in positive interactions. This experience has impacted how they deal with themselves and others around them.

Influence on School Participation

Though causal links between school success and PCTV participation were not revealed through this evaluation, parents, youth, and school staff made numerous observations of positive influences on PCTV youths' participation in school. These accounts were most prevalent from an alternative school that has a growing number of students participating in the PCTV program. This was likely due to the fact that these were the only school faculty interviewed. However, parents and youth from other schools did also provide some insights. The alternative school staff talked about improved attendance, increased longevity in school, increased technology competencies, increased interest in learning, leadership development, and an overall positive impact on school. For mainstream school students PCTV provided positive feedback and an increased interest in learning.

Alternative School Students

Staff members from the alternative school cited many ways that PCTV participation positively impacted their students.

Improved Attendance

The principal of the alternative school stated that their students attend about 70% of the time. They arrive at this school, however, with even lower attendance patterns; some have not been in school for a year or more. He went on to say that their students who participate in PCTV have an attendance record of 90%. He illustrated the point with this remark:

He [a PCTV participant] and some of the other students were making commercials and that was definitely shaping him and his attendance was picking up. He has something special about him in his mind... "I'm doing something unique and special."

According to the principal, students simply do not miss the days that they go to PCTV after school. The principal also expressed that while the school has never measured that select group's grades, there is a tremendous correlation between attendance and achievement with grades.

Increased Longevity in School

School staff members said clearly that while PCTV involvement did not "cause" students to stay in school, it was an important factor. They felt that being involved in something positive outside of school that kept students safe, gave them hope, was unique to them, and set them off as special, also fostered their involvement in school. The principal spoke about the "*humanness to our relationship with our students and PCTV.*" The connection between the school and PCTV helped students "*stay put,*" he said, and for at least one student PCTV played a role in the student staying in school and focusing on graduating:

I think that there was a chance that a student who just graduated would not have graduated at least by this point if he wasn't involved in PCTV. So many positive things happened to him this year that he just really became focused on, "Now I have a plan that people believe in, I believe in, and I'm going to be successful, I am successful," those sort of things. I don't think he would be graduated right now. I think he would still be struggling with things.

Increased Technology Competencies

School staff were excited about the notion that through involvement in PCTV students were able to benefit from complimentary learning. Students were learning a lot about technology at PCTV and bringing it back to school with them. At the same time students had open access to learning at their school and were allowed to further explore things they had learned and take some of that experience back to PCTV. A teacher describes why this is working:

It's a great compliment in the fact that he was able to get stuff here and use those skills there [PCTV] which provides the relevance needed to justify learning either one in either place. So the fact that he saw that all these tools were useful and a higher purpose of serving the public good, I think those are all things that kids can connect to.

This alternative school also gives academic credit to PCTV students. Rather than using a traditional method of assessing students, students are required to show their alternative school teachers what they have learned in PCTV.

With any course, you have course outcomes. This is what a student must learn. Not a syllabus but these are the main ideas, and when a student shows they understand those ideas, credit is given. They could sit in our classrooms all day and if they don't understand those ideas, they don't get the credit. So in that way, it provides benefit because it really puts the ownership on the students so they see it as in life they are really learning something. So PCTV has helped us because it's one of those moments you think about in life, those moments when you really learn something. You were doing, it was hands-on, you cared about it. That's one of those places where the kids really feel like they learned something. "I really know how to do this. I really get this." Confidence.

The principal went on to say that PCTV helps students meet the new technology requirement in the No Child Left Behind act. It requires that a student have a certain level of competence in technology. Staff members have observed in their students that anyone who has been involved in PCTV for any length of time achieves it. The students are easily able to provide evidence that what they have learned is in alignment with the federal outcomes.

Leadership Development

One school staff member noted that schools generally have a limited view of computer technology. Computers are typically seen as a link to Internet information and a means for typing documents. PCTV students were able to bring what they had learned from PCTV to the classroom and expand the technology program. A few youth have been able to act as leaders in their school's media and technology classes. The school now has a media production class where students are using digital cameras. The school had done this type of thing before, but now they are becoming much more intentional about it. Upon graduation, one student was offered a position as a paid assistant in this class. Though this arrangement did not work well because the student had just graduated and the students in his class were still his peers, another student has acted on a volunteer basis to help other students in the technology class.

Increased Interest in Learning

Though a correlation between PCTV participation and grades has not been officially identified, the staff suspects that PCTV involvement enhances a student's quality of learning. Students who are learning in an experiential setting and are applying that education to real world work are interested in learning other things as well. Once students experience what it feels like to be successful they want to become more successful. They begin to understand the importance of learning and how it applies to their lives. For one student this was a profound leap, as described by the principal:

I think he's better understood academics in relationship to his success. He's come to better understand that he doesn't want to look dumb. I've had him sit in meetings and later found out that he went to look things up, do some reflecting and research to try and catch up [about what he didn't understand in the meeting]. My guess is because of this video experience, he's been pulled into a lot of those situations.

Impact on School-at-Large

According to the principal, when students see another student go beyond their comfort zone and achieve something amazing, they begin to think it may be possible for them as well. If one of their fellow students can accomplish something then perhaps they can too. The principal describes one student's impact on the school:

This student created a special amazing moment through PCTV, with Battleground Minnesota. He was named Student of the Year for the state of Minnesota in alternative education. Every student knows that. That turns this into a good school. That turns into "I'm glad I'm here." That turns into "I'm going to be successful because I've found a good place." They've all arrived with, "I hate school, I'm stupid, I didn't like school, I don't like you, this isn't going to work anyway." Then they sort of can transfer into "God, I love it, I found a good place for me."

This alternative school has had a small core group of students that have been at PCTV for several years. They have seen different positive impacts for all of them. Because of this

success they have been working harder to get the word out. This past spring nine more students signed up for PCTV.

The principal wanted to make very clear the message he was trying to relay:

It's not just those specific students that are affected by this relationship. There's a very important ripple effect because our students being involved in this effects how this school feels and how staff perceive our students We now have a media class—PCTV is very important and we're building a relationship. So, I think it's going to effect how we believe students learn well. It's not so much those 3, 4, 5, 9 students; it's the impact on the reality, the perception of what this school is about and who the students are who go here. I think that's the major impact that we've had from PCTV.

Mainstream School Students

This evaluation does not have as many data regarding PCTV's impact on students at mainstream schools primarily because no faculty members from these schools were interviewed. However, youth and parents shared some of their observations and experiences about school and PCTV. For the most part they talked about how PCTV differed from school; at PCTV they received positive feedback that helped increase their confidence in learning, something that was lacking at school.

Several students spoke about conflicts they experienced in school with both faculty and peers. At least two students had antagonistic relationships with teachers and peers at school. PCTV provided them the opportunity to experience what gratifying relationships were like:

Because people here I like, so learning here is actually fun...like stuff I learn, you know, I actually like learning it and like Michael and Andrea they are nice and stuff. They're not like teachers...all strict and stuff. At school the teachers, like if I ask them a question or something, like, actually don't help me, like sit down and like help me with it—like here if I ask them how to do something they'll, like, sit down and talk through it, actually, like, watch me do, like, it again to see if I actually got it.

Youth said it opened them up to possible achievement because they were not being graded or judged for their interests or their work. Several students said they were made to feel “stupid” at school, but that PCTV provided a place to thrive and feel intelligent:

I like coming here because I don't get a grade like in school. It's sad that you [get] a C or an F, you feel bad this year. You don't try anymore. [At PCTV] they keep helping you and they don't give you a grade, so you're not being judged at all.

Yeah! I just, like, realized that I am not stupid and I actually can try my best if I actually, like, do it!

One person stopped caring about school towards the end of middle school, before she started PCTV. She was getting suspended and getting poor grades. Now, several years later, she is doing well academically and behaviorally and is involved in extracurricular activities at school. This student was also not happy about being assigned to a particular high school. She said she was “...mad all the time, people were scared to talk to me because when I’m not smiling, I look very evil.” When her mother was asked whether PCTV played a role in this turn around she replied, “As far as academics, I don’t know. She’s a bright child inwardly. As far as her schooling, she’s more accepting of people with diverse backgrounds.”

Being successful in learning at PCTV has carried over to youth seeking out other learning opportunities at school that their parents felt they would not have otherwise had the confidence to do. For some it was classes they took, such as music. For others it was extracurricular activities they would not have otherwise joined. For at least one student it has inspired her to finish high school:

Well, I have an older sister and she’s not graduating this year...like, she supposed to be graduating already, but I learned from her experiences and, like, my family too...like no one in our family [grandma, mom, dad, sister] graduated from high school yet...so I want to be the first one!

Students felt strongly that PCTV is successful in part because it is not connected to a school. According to students, if PCTV was at one school then students from other schools may not feel comfortable. Having PCTV at a neutral location alleviates any territorial issues. In addition, if you have conflicts at school those conflicts may carry over into the program. Youth also talked about the ill feelings they have about school and that school causes them to have about themselves, and how those negative perceptions would be carried over to the program. Having PCTV as a neutral place allows youth to leave these feelings from school behind and start fresh with a new outlook, and thus a new experience in learning:

At school, like you get teased and made fun of, maybe have a fight with people you don’t like. So, it could be the best after-school program ever but it’s still tied into school...it wouldn’t be good.

Increased Technical Knowledge and Skills

I just like being able to work with cameras and stuff. Before PCTV, I never, ever worked with a camcorder or digital cameras. I didn't even know what that stuff was until I went there. Then I liked working with that stuff. It was cool and interesting.

Collectively, the interviewed youth were able to articulate a long list of technical skills they have gained from their PCTV participation. While the list was impressive, it is almost pointless to identify without some context. These skills were acquired and applied because youth were allowed to pursue technical areas that interested them personally. Youth also increased their knowledge in sociological topic areas they explored through media production. This along with the work being meaningful is what kept youth engaged.

Acquisition of Technical Skills

According to youth interviewed, each has acquired a repertoire of skills. PCTV youth are exposed to all aspects of media production and computer technology. Which skills they acquired depended on personal interests and in which media program(s) they participated. Youth were very honest in expressing their likes and dislikes and whether they believed they were good at something or not, as one youth described:

Yeah, hosting was really boring. All they do is, like, explain the segments and I like actually doing interviews. Cause usually when you're interviewing, you're learning stuff too and getting more information.

Some youth appear to be all-around performers, but many seemed to find a niche they felt comfortable with. For example, one young woman said she really likes and has been developing skills for behind the scenes work like setting up interviews and writing scripts, but is not good at editing and has no interest in it. After a couple of years of working behind the scenes she has begun to build her confidence and also has been on camera. Another youth has spent a great deal of time on editing. Though he talked about learning how to use cameras, lights, and sound equipment, he has found his niche and has developed his skills in the editing phase of production.

The skills that youth spoke most about included:

- **Media Production:** How to produce and direct movies; script writing; behind the scenes work (setting up interviews, scheduling shootings, and so on); how to use video cameras, light equipment, and sound equipment; and how to express an idea or message.
- **Photography:** How to use film and digital cameras; how to develop film; and how to use Photoshop software.
- **Computers:** Basic computer skills; how to use multiple software packages (such as Adobe Pagemaker); and how to design Websites.

Though this study relied on each interviewee's identification of skills, youth were able to discuss media in ways they would not have been able to if they did not have these skills and experiences. They articulated differences between mediums and how messages are portrayed through various types of media. They were able to discuss the steps of pre-production, production, and post-production not only in explicit detail, but also in terms of how they have learned to modify the steps according to their personal styles.

Teamwork

Since producing meaningful media at PCTV is generally done in groups, youth must learn how to work together. An outcome just as important to a youth's development is learning how to fit into social structures. PCTV youth learned how to organize themselves socially through their media production work. Though not necessarily considered a technical skill, being able to function as a team played an important role in these young people's ability to accomplish the work. Youth spoke a great deal about learning how to be open to others' ideas, how to respect each other, how to ask for help, and in general how to interact in positive ways. Some youth said they had not had opportunities previously to work successfully with a group of peers. Some youth talked about the difficulties of doing group projects in school because of lack of interest of many students and of a disrespectful environment.

Access to Meaningful, Real Work

For some it is the access to equipment that makes the work meaningful, but for most it is access to different situations, people, and messages. The majority of the youth in PCTV had not previously had the opportunity to access any of these things and to utilize their access to achieve purposeful work. As one youth described, it's not just the media equipment, but what they are able to do because they are working on a media project. It gives them permission to go out and talk to people and collect different kinds of information.

I really enjoy the media because the media finds out stuff that people don't hear behind closed doors and we can actually get behind those closed doors or...with people on the street. The news always talks to, like, mainly important people, so they don't always talk to people on the street about something. They don't go out and do it and we do. So you'll find out a different point of view on a topic or an important subject and the people who want to hear it.

Of particular significance is that youth who remain engaged even for one year have the opportunity to build upon their acquired skills and interests by creating multiple productions. For those whose involvement lasts longer, the possibilities for growth are exponential. This was illustrated by the Battleground Minnesota production, which expanded the camera and editing skills of one young man and the interviewing skills of another. A school administrator described one of the students that has gained a great deal of recognition from the real work he has done at PCTV:

I think he walked in with a lot of innate skills. I think he walked here with a lot of unique pieces, aptitudes, and PCTV allowed for those to be applied in a very public way. That video on PBS was the highest-rated program that we've done on PBS and so it was a very public expression of his talent and time and again people will speak to you, "Oh, I saw you! You were so good! You were so charismatic! You were so funny! You were so charming!" Whatever the word they want to use, but people definitely picked that up. It's like the world knows about this young guy with a lot of talent.

Increased Community Opportunities

With newfound confidence and expertise, youth were encouraged to expand on what they had learned and experienced at PCTV. Phillips Community Television is a bridge for youth to experience community in new ways. They are examining and interacting with community, including expanded ways of participating in school, job links, educational goals, and people who are different from their usual acquaintances. Many youth have received local and national recognition for their productions. Most notable was Battleground Minnesota, which has created numerous community connections for one youth who was involved.

Different Connections to School

At least two youth have gotten involved in school in ways they had not before because of confidence and skills they gained at PCTV. They have taken “new” classes at school, such as piano and photography, and have gotten involved in positive extracurricular activities such as track and school yearbook design. An adult who knows one of these youth well contemplated PCTV’s role:

What I’m saying is, I wonder if PCTV was kind of that door into those other activities, both being in the arts program, yearbook, and, like, the idea of being a photo journalist. My speculation is that it has! I really do think that might have just got her thinking, “Oh I can do this! I can be involved in extracurricular activities!”

Connections to Jobs

Several youth talked about being able to use PCTV as a job reference. At least one youth talked about being able to get a summer job that required skills he learned at PCTV. Other youth talked about transferable skills and how they might use them in jobs. These skills included interviewing, collecting and organizing information, and teamwork.

Connections to Education and Career Goals

Several youth talked about career and education dreams that were inspired through their experience at PCTV. The youth aspire to be in television broadcasting, media production or directing, and computer technology. One youth has applied for entrance into the Institute of Production and Recording. Two youth, whose career dreams are not related to media or technology, were inspired by their involvement in PCTV to attend college. Both will be the first in their families to do so.

Connections to New People

Two youth have expanded their lives in numerous ways by developing long-term relationships with a photographer. They met this photographer when she was an interim staff member at PCTV. She invited them into her world of photography and the relationship has continued for almost two years. Through this relationship the youth have modeled extensively for photos, have written personal reflections about their photos and

their relationships, have inventively decorated the photos, and had their photos in a show. Arguably, the most profound extension of this experience is the opportunity to have an in-depth relationship with someone who is from a completely different world than their own.

I never met anybody like her. I wouldn't hang out with nobody like her type, like an art person. We call her artsy person. It's not the kind of people, like, I'm never around that environment to meet somebody like that.

Through this relationship they have been introduced not only to new physical spaces, but also intellectual spaces. They have learned about a different worldview, and have had conversations about pressing teen issues with someone who thinks differently than they do. It is not clear how this experience and this relationship will impact these young women in the long run, but the importance of young people making positive connections to caring adults outside of their family is a pillar of positive youth development.

Exposure and Recognition

The Phillips Community Television staff works hard at getting youths' media production recognized. Some examples of exposure youths' films have received:

- The Flower Room: My Story of Volunteering” was shown as part of the Urban Visionaries Youth Film Festival in New York City.
- “Untitled” was shown as part of the City Wide High School cabaret at Patrick’s Cabaret in Minneapolis.
- Four PCTV videos were shown at the Girls in the Director’s Chair Film & Video Festival at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.
- The Our Turn: Teen Pregnancy show was selected as the “best special” from the youth produced work of Manhattan Neighborhood Network’s Youth Channel, shown in New York City and around the country.
- The Battleground Minnesota video was viewed all over Minnesota, including footage shown on several local networks, and gained national recognition when it won the Jury Award at the Media That Matters Film Festival in New York City.

Doors Wide Open

One youth in particular has had many doors open to him due to his participation in PCTV. This youth had been involved in the program for several years. He brought with him some raw skills and lots of talent and interest. His primary motivation was his interest in music. PCTV gave him the opportunity to further explore his musical pursuits and taught him many skills along the way. He has been able to use his interests and skills in a variety of media productions, was deemed a leader in his school, and was offered leadership opportunities. The leadership opportunities began to extend beyond school. For example, he spoke about technology and kids at the Twin Cities Youth Worker Coalition meeting. PCTV staff further elicited his talents by recruiting him for the Battleground Minnesota video. He had access to people and ideas that were completely new to him. According to his principal:

His world exploded for him. Suddenly he's next to Walter Mondale and the governor and senators and all these sort of things. A lot of people were very interested and newspapers interviewing him and radio stations interviewing...that was a stretch there, he was on his cell phone everyday talking, being interviewed during school... "What are you doing on your cell phone in school? You cannot have cell phones...." "Sorry, I'm on the radio, right now being interviewed! I'll be right with you!"

Since that time he was elected Minnesota Student of the Year and has had offers to participate in videos nationally and abroad.

His talents and experience with media flourished with the Battleground Minnesota video and have allowed him many opportunities that previously were out of reach. A school faculty member who knew him well said, *"I'm pretty certain he perceives his career in relationship to what happened at PCTV."*

This isn't the end of the road for this entrepreneurial youth, he still has his eye on the prize and is envisioning how he can continue to move forward with his dreams:

I'll be done with school after December, be a high school graduate, and I will continue my dreams in audio production attending the Institute of Production and Recording. So that'll give me my two-year degree in audio production, and I'll go to the Minnesota School of Business for, like, business management or something. Put those two together, blam! Verstile Records are finally officiated, affiliated, whatever. Okay, blam, we get that together, that's when I start producing my music and getting published and all that other stuff, distribution deals, and all of that. Give me some PR. Give me some more promoters and album designs, and connect with PCTV. I wanna put some money into this organization when I get some.

These increased community opportunities are a starting point for youth to become further engaged in the community. Without learning how to bridge knowledge, skills, and experience to broader contexts outside of their immediate programs, youth would not be able to venture on to the bigger goal of positive community involvement. Phillips Community television helps youth understand their role and likely has begun to build their desire to give back to the community.

Conclusion

Through the excitement of media arts, Phillips Community Television successfully recruits young people who are lacking some basic needs such as positive participation in a meaningful youth program. For many participants, programs they have enjoyed in the past are no longer exciting or an acceptable thing to do with peers. Avenues for exploring their interests and “who they are” are limited. PCTV has broken barriers that often keep youth from participating: lack of interest in program offerings, lack of self-confidence, program cost and transportation, and lack of friend or peer involvement. Youth often join PCTV during their middle school or early high school years and those who become engaged stay involved well into their high school years. PCTV generally creates a pivotal time in participant’s lives, offering youth a safe place to spend productive time with peers that have similar interests. Many youth utilize PCTV as a safe haven during turbulent years and as a transition into other activities. Youth engaging in PCTV activities long-term have experienced increased confidence, hands-on training to further enhance their skills and to explore themselves and their interests. In this complex web of youth development, it can be difficult to distinguish between changes that may have happened anyway, general maturity, and the attributes the program has impacted. It is highly probable that these young people would have either continued with “unconstructive” use of time or would have tried other programs that may or may not have been successful for them. However, given youths’ limited past experiences with programs during their teenaged years, the latter is not as likely as the former.

Youth participants, parents, and other involved adults attribute various successes participants have had to their PCTV involvement. Youth have become better at relating to other people and are beginning to branch out of the small worlds they have been living in. They have newfound confidence that they are applying to social, school, and public situations. They are becoming more involved in extracurricular activities and are making numerous connections in their community.

Learning media arts and related technical skills is the catalyst for everything else that occurs, however, it is only the beginning of what young people acquire when involved long-term in the program. Youth participants have explored social issues and PCTV has given them an outlet to let their voices on these issues be heard in very public ways. Phillips Community Television participants have the opportunity to explore themselves, their interests, and their communities and it is likely they are beginning to feel a part of a larger community and beginning to carve out their role in it.