

SUPPORTING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR YPI

YPI's program model and target outcomes are aligned with the strongest current research into major developmental frameworks for youth, as outlined in "[Youth Who Thrive](#)": a summary of critical factors and effective programs for youth, created by the [Students Commission of Canada](#) and the [Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen's University](#) for the [YMCA of Greater Toronto, United Way Toronto](#) (now known as United Way Toronto and York Region), and the [Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services](#).

Thriving Defined:

Thriving can be seen through school success, leadership, helping others, maintenance of physical health, delay of gratification, valuing diversity, and overcoming adversity. These short- and medium-term outcomes are often used as indicators of health and thriving.

Thriving in adolescence generally leads to long-term health and well-being in adulthood. Young people who thrive during adolescence are more likely to feel psychologically and physically healthy, contribute to their communities, achieve success in education and employment, maintain strong relationships, and be satisfied with their lives as adults.

Effective youth programs can contribute to positive outcomes for youth, who in turn positively impact their communities (youthwhothrive.ca).

Youth Who Thrive ARC Framework

YPI's program model is supported by the Youth Who Thrive "ARC" framework. The ARC framework asserts that youth need to develop Autonomy; Relatedness; and Competence to thrive both in adolescence, as well as adulthood, with evidence-supported implications for long-term individual, social, and system outcomes such as physical and mental well-being, healthy relationships, employment, and responsible citizenship. The following table outlines YPI's practical alignment with the summary of effective practices detailed in the ARC framework.

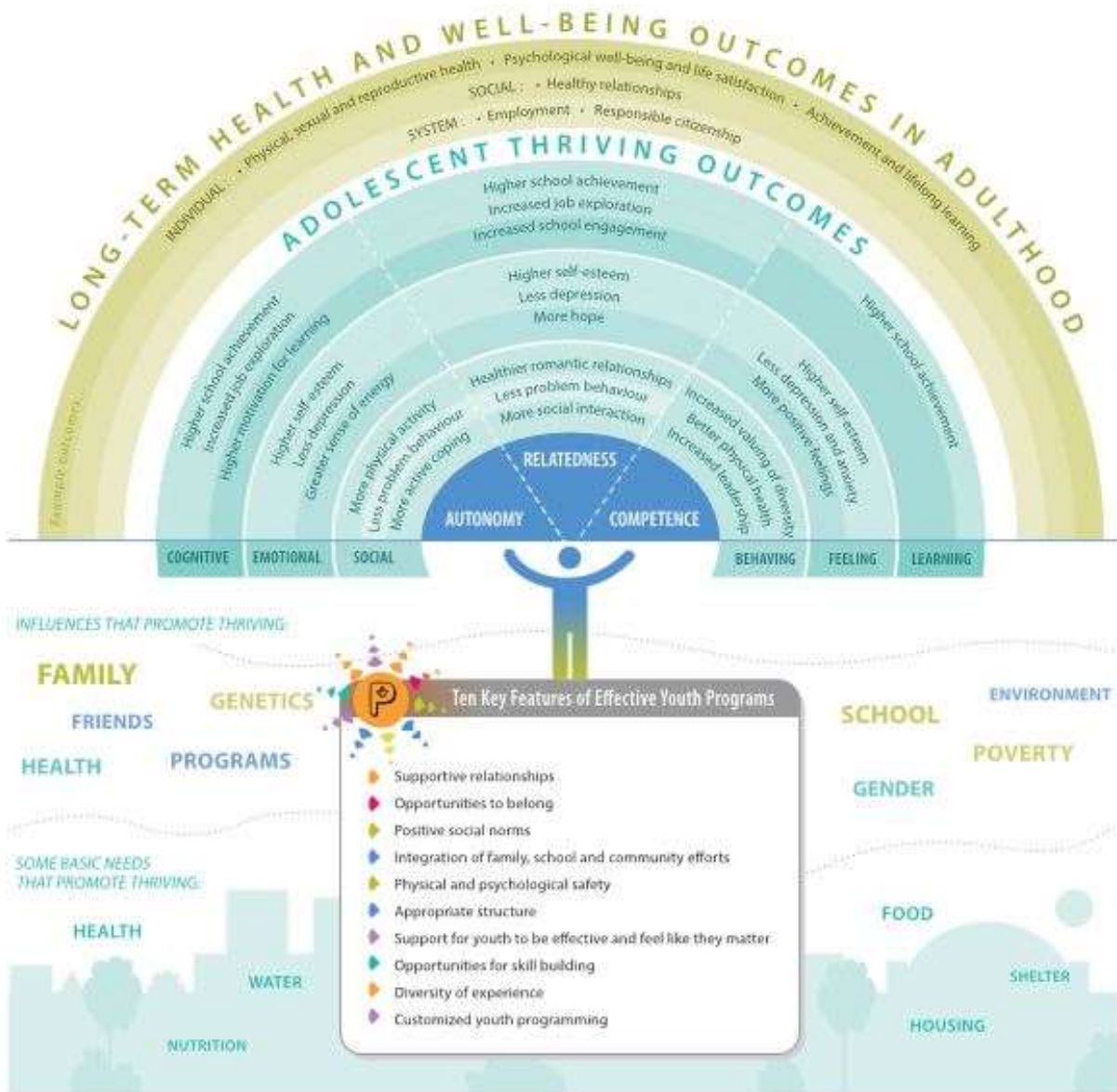
		YPI Examples
AUTONOMY	1. Acknowledge youth perspectives	Students choose social issues and charities for their YPI projects. (Students report on this through surveys).
	2. Be responsive to young people's interests	Students are responsible for the ultimate decision of where the grant at their school goes (YPI monitors this through teacher surveys and observation).
	3. Encourage initiative	Much of the YPI project relies on the initiative of teams of students, who must arrange a site visit with their charities independent from their teachers.
	4. Invite youth to consider, share and develop personal goals that are relevant to their life planning	Students reflect on their career path through YPI evaluations (i.e. students are asked whether they would consider a career in the non-profit sector;

		students are asked whether they have/will talked about YPI on their resume, in an interview, etc.)
	5. Provide a rationale for rules	YPI Student Resources provide rationale for safety rules regarding charity visits, and rationale for program requirements.
	6. Offer meaningful choices, including options for youth to leave a program if they are no longer motivated to be involved	While there is not an option for students to drop out of YPI and still receive course credit, they have the autonomy to shape the project with meaningful choices throughout. (Students report on these choices through surveys).
	7. Provide opportunities for planning and decision making within programs	YPI offers tools for students to plan and manage their projects as well as tools to help them with collaborative decision-making. (Students report on the usefulness of these tools through surveys).
	8. Ensure decision-making opportunities are meaningful, but not too stressful	The decisions students make during their YPI projects shape their experience, and teachers are present to support their decisions at every step.
	9. Offer more structure and guidance to young people who are already dealing with a high level of responsibilities	Teachers use their discretion, and are able to offer more structure and guidance when appropriate.
	10. Ensure deliberate use of unstructured time in positive social contexts	Unstructured class time is dedicated to group research, charity visit preparation, and presentation preparation. (Teachers report on class time spent on YPI, and students report on time spent outside of class).
RELATEDNESS	1. Provide emotionally supportive relationships particularly during the transition from elementary to secondary education	
	2. Provide opportunities for youth to build attachment, intimacy, and shared interests with their peers	YPI is completed as a team project, with teams reporting that they spend an average of X hours together in the classroom, and X hours outside the classroom working on their project.
	3. Foster a sense of belonging in programs and broader organizational contexts	3. STRONG
	4. Support parents to build strong attachment bonds with their children	
	5. Provide opportunities for positive socialization with family and peers	Students are encouraged to speak to their friends and family outside of the class about what they learned through YPI. (Students report that they share their YPI

		experience with an average of X people outside of their class).
	6. Sustain adult-youth relationships for at least 6 months, with frequent contact, involvement, and closeness	
	7. Provide helpful, supportive, encouraging, dependable, and consistent mentor/advocate relationships with youth exiting care	
	8. Provide opportunities to recognize the impacts of racism, to explore youth's cultural community and identity	YPI begins with students exploring their values and identity and progresses to looking outward at social issues prevalent in their local community, with a focus on marginalized populations. (This is embedded in the YPI core curriculum).
	9. Build youth-adult partnerships characterized by power-sharing	Student voice is emphasized in YPI, which results in a power-sharing dynamic between students and teachers. (Teachers are surveyed about the opportunity to develop student voice through YPI)
	10. Coordinate community efforts to increase connections across young people's families, schools and community programs	Through YPI, schools become increasingly connected to their communities and community organizations (Teachers are surveyed on whether YPI creates opportunities for their school to connect meaningfully with the community).
COMPETENCE	1. Offer opportunities for skill-building and mastery of different types of competence over time	YPI focuses on the development of 21 st century skills/competencies. (Students and teachers are surveyed on the successful development of these skills).
	2. Integrate communication, listening and cooperation skill-building	Communication, listening, and cooperation are all required for effectively working in teams, which is at the core of YPI. (This is built into the program model).
	3. Provide opportunities to interact with youth with diverse perspectives and backgrounds	This is dependent on the school and local community demographics.
	4. Integrate emotional skill-building so that youth can understand, identify and regulate emotions, and use positive emotions to foster well-being	
	5. Encourage youth to problem solve	Problems we sometimes hear about at YPI are scheduling a visit with charities, and interpersonal conflicts among groups (i.e. distribution of workload).

	Students have guidance from their teacher, but ultimately are tasked with solving these problems independently. (We survey students about challenges they faced during the project, and ask them to comment on these challenges).
6. Offer opportunities to reflect on and acknowledge individual and group achievements to improve young people's perceived competence	YPI's post-program/plenary session is an opportunity for students to reflect on the cognitive (learning), emotional (feeling), and social (behaving) outcomes of the program. They discuss what they learned, how they felt, and how their behaviour will change. They also take an inventory of the skills they developed and how these skills will aid them in the future. (We ask teachers to report back on the results of this session).
7. Ensure appropriate challenge	YPI is a challenging program for grade 9 and 10 students that puts them outside their comfort zones, but through our experience operating the program over the years, the challenges are age-appropriate, and students rise to meet them. (We ask teachers about their school's ability to comply with program requirements, and for feedback on our model).
8. Offer opportunities to explore options and make plans for the future	Students are encouraged to reflect on how they can use the skills they developed through YPI in the future. (We ask them to do this through the plenary session, and through reflective questions on surveys).
9. Provide opportunities for new experiences	Before YPI, most students have not conducted interviews with staff outside their school, or delivered pitch presentations for a grant. (We know this anecdotally).
10. Ensure breadth and depth of programs	

For each element of the ARC Framework, there are cognitive, emotional, and social (or learning, feeling, and behaving) outcomes. Examples of these outcomes, as well as influences and basic needs that promote thriving, and key features of effective youth programs is outlined in the figure below:



* Outcomes listed are examples from studies that passed the standards of evidence test for the literature review. There may be other outcomes that contribute to thriving in adolescence.

YPI & Positive Youth Development

YPI's program model is supported by the five core principals of positive youth development theory:



Core Principle	Evidence	How YPI Addresses Principles
Competence	Positive view of one's actions in specific areas, including social competence (interpersonal skills), cognitive competence (cognitive abilities), academic competence (school grades, attendance, and test scores), and vocational competence (work habits and career choice explorations).	YPI promotes the development social competence, cognitive competence, academic competence, and vocational competence, along with the development of 21 st century competencies. Students are surveyed on their perceptions of these competencies, and asked to reflect on how they will use them moving forward.
Confidence	An internal sense of positive self-efficacy and self-worth at an overall level rather than in specific areas; one's global self-regard.	YPI promotes self-efficacy by challenging and empowering students to make meaningful decisions. Students and teachers are surveyed on the development of student confidence through YPI.
Connection	Positive bonds with people and institutions reflected in bi-directional exchanges between youth and peers, family, school, and community.	Connection among students is promoted through teamwork in YPI; and connection between students and people at local charities is promoted through the required charity visits.
Character	Respect for societal and cultural rules, standards for correct behaviours, integrity, and a sense of right and wrong (morality).	Through post-program surveys, students report on the internal changes that take place regarding their character, and their empathy/compassion.

Caring/ Compassion	A sense of sympathy and empathy for others.	
Contribution	When the five Cs are present, youth contribute positively to self, family, community, and society. These contributions have a behavioural component (actions) and an ideological component (belief that contributions are a necessary part of one's civic duty).	We survey students on social/behavioural outcomes of participating in YPI, and find that the five Cs present in our program model do lead positive actions and ideologies relating to their communities.

YPI Program Outcomes for Youth

At YPI, we measure our own cognitive, emotional, and social outcomes among participating youth through annual pre- and post-program surveys with students, feedback surveys with teachers, and occasional focus groups with YPI alumni, as outlined below.

General Outcome:

Youth develop the skills, character, and knowledge that are required for more compassionate communities and for meaningful civic engagement.

Cognitive (Learning/Skill Development/Head) Outcomes

1. Youth are aware of social issues in their communities
2. Youth have a good understanding of the role of charities in their communities
3. Youth develop 21st century skills (creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, character, citizenship, tech)
4. Youth perceive future benefit in the skills and knowledge they gained through YPI

Emotional (Feeling/Heart) Outcomes:

5. Youth know themselves and their values on a deeper level
6. Youth become more empathetic
7. Youth believe that they can make a positive difference in their communities through their voices and actions

Social (Behavioural/Hands) Outcomes:

8. Youth speak up about social issues that they care about in their communities
9. Youth talk about local charities and how they help people in their community

In addition to these youth outcomes, we also measure outcomes for schools, charities, and communities, and these outcomes are outlined in our Evaluation Plan (LINK).