Youth Community Informatics: Engagement through Technology-Supported Inquiry into Community Issues

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Workshop Agenda & Goals

- **What is Youth Community Informatics?**

- **Two Case Studies**

- **Hands-on with Inquiry (Community Journalism)**

- **Q&A / Getting Involved**
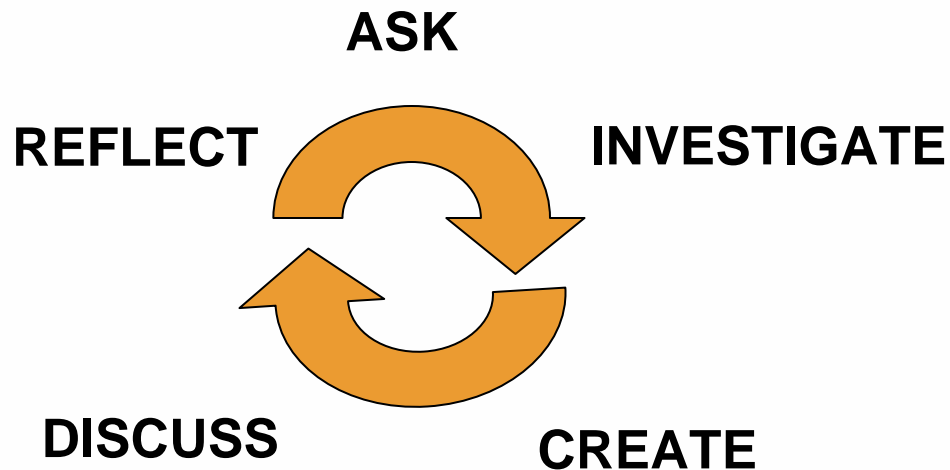
What is "Youth Community Informatics?"

- **Partnership between University of Illinois Extension and Graduate School of Library and Information Science**

- **3-year grant (Institute of Museum & Library Science)**

- **International network of youth and youth-serving organizations**

Mission: **Engaging underserved youth using cutting-edge technologies to address local community issues**
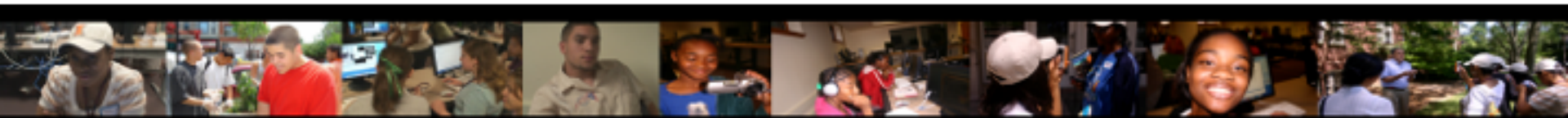
Youth Community Inquiries

ASK

REFLECT

INVESTIGATE

DISCUSS

CREATE

- Community Journalism

- Community Mapping

- Youth as Curator

- Video Documentary

- Computer Refurbishing

- Community Blog/Wiki

- **Community Profile**
    - **St. Clair County, IL**
    - **Urban blight, white flight, brain drain**
    - **Poverty, crime, corruption, low performing schools**
    - **Outsider perspectives**

- **Telling another story**
    - **Community members actively working toward positive change.**
    - **Youth using media to amplify their voices**

- **Teen Tech History**
  - **Originally a partnership with 2 local groups and UI**
  - **Strongly supported by UI staff**
  - **Focus on skills development and entrepreneurial leadership**

- **Negotiating New Partnerships**

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  - **Modeling Inquiry learning activities**

  - **Youth-driven topics**

  - **Playing a supportive, but not dominant role**

  - **Encouraging local autonomous decision making**

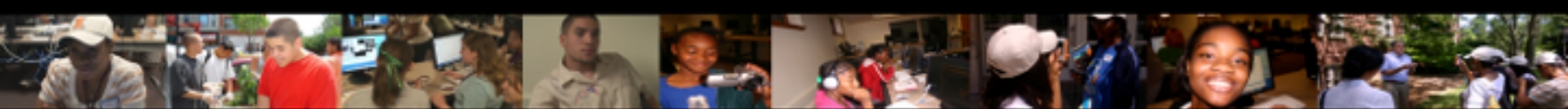# Case Study 1: Teen Tech – East St. Louis, IL

- **YCI Summer Forum 2008**

- **Youth media examples**

- **Partnership with YCI since September 2008**

- **Encouraging sustainability, increasing local capacity, focusing on teens' inquiry**

- **Analysis & Lessons Learned**

- **YCI roles:**
  - **Provide support and new equipment to Teen Tech**

  - **Build capacity & sustainability by encouraging local decision making**

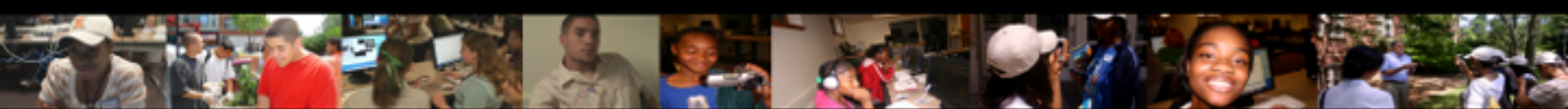 - **Connecting Teen Tech with other local groups**

Rantoul History:
- **Since August of 2008**
- **'Youth Democracy' High School youth working to dispel myths about race, class and poverty in Rantoul.**
- **Working in the shadow of a defunct air force base that has more roads and buildings than the village owns.**

- **Very intensive involvement, graduate assistant is the community organization leader**
- **This has its positive aspects and its drawbacks**
- **Students never thought of themselves as agents of change – until they began their work.**

Case Study 2: Rantoul

Sustainability is the biggest issue, once the graduate student and project funding are gone, what do students do to make sure their work will continue for future generations interested in affecting change?

Working with educators in a school that by some accounts is failing youth can inhibit the learning process. Students associate bad situations, i.e. suspensions, detentions, remedial classes with their educational settings, so this work is seen in some instances as extensions of this cycle.
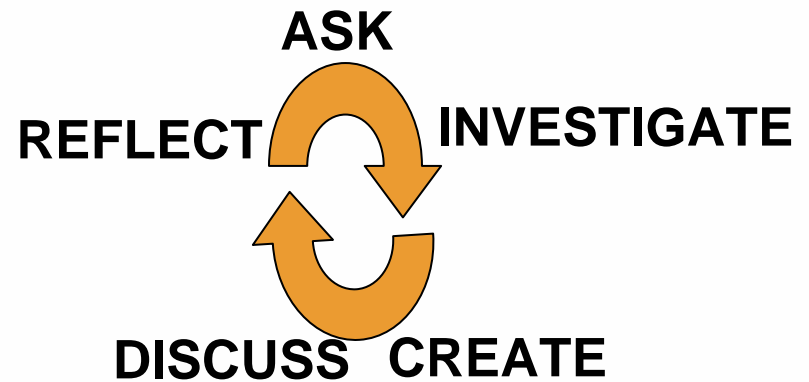
Community Journalism

ASK (10 min)

• **What are the issues facing youth in our communities?**

• **How do these issues affect services and programs like ours?**

• **How are youth empowered to voices their ideas and concerns?**

- **in our programs?**
- **through other venues in the community?**

• **How do our services and programs seek to impact these issues?**

ASK

REFLECT   INVESTIGATE

DISCUSS   CREATE

INVESTIGATE (10 min)

ASK

REFLECT   INVESTIGATE

DISCUSS   CREATE

• **What are the three top issues most places have in common?**

• **What solutions or ideas can you share with each other to address these issues?**

• **Who are the stakeholders in my community who have an impact on these issues?**

• **After 10 minutes discussing, each group should record a 1-2 video of someone in the other group, responding to these common issues and reflecting on possible solutions or ideas you discussed.**
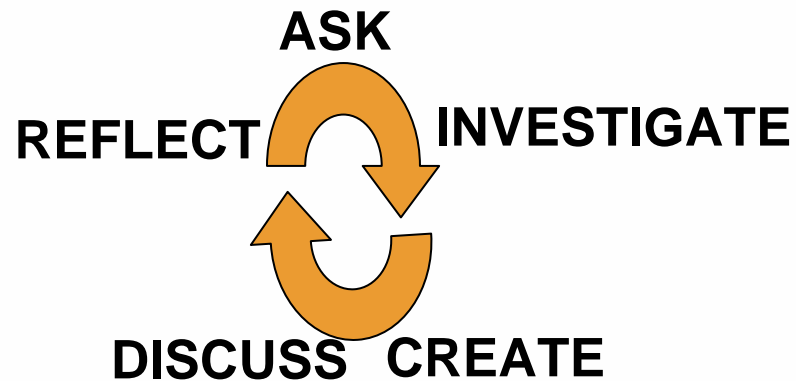
Community Journalism

CREATE (15 min)

ASK
REFLECT   INVESTIGATE
DISCUSS CREATE

- **Short interview and presentation**
- **Roles:**
  - **Interviewer**
  - **Interviewee(s) (playing the role of a stakeholder)**
  - **Camera operator**
  - **Note taker(s)**
  - **Spokesperson/presenters**
- **Tasks:**   **- Record three, one-minute clips on 3 issues**
                    - Compile group info (names, contact, programs, audiences, etc.)
                    - Present 1-2 min.: most interesting things
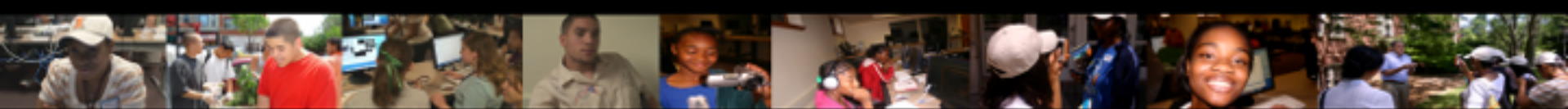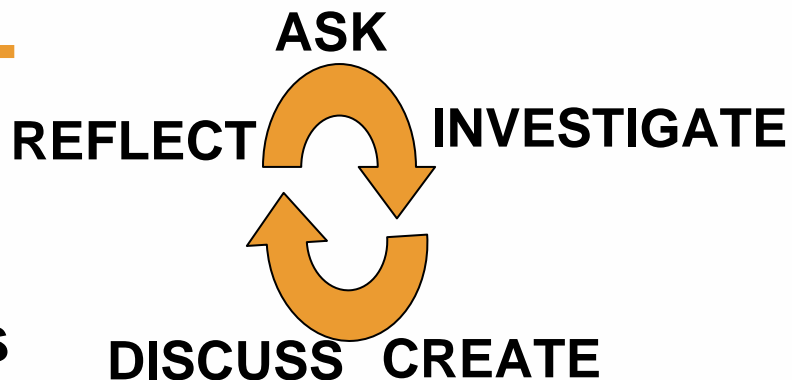   **your group learned**

Community Journalism

DISCUSS/REFLECT

ASK
REFLECT   INVESTIGATE
DISCUSS CREATE

- **Take home reflection:**
    - **Did I find common issues with others who provide similar services to youth?**

    - **Would this process make collaboration easier with other organizations or individuals in my community?**

Comparison of these case studies

	Opportunities	Constraints
Rantoul *School Partnership*	• Nearby: more opportunity for in-person collaboration • Continuity of attendance	• Existing student-teacher roles • Association with school expectations
East St. Louis *Community Based Organization*	• Program open to new ideas • Distance helped empower local staff decision making • Connecting similarly focused local organizations with each other	• Distance: fewer opportunities for in-person collaboration • Overcoming history of unequal partnerships • Support of local infrastructure needs more difficult at a distance
4H Club *After school program*		

Getting Involved

Diverse Partnership Arrangements

- Network Sites

- Partner Sites

- YCI Sites

Website (**yci.illinois.edu**)

- Downloadable inquiry units

- Online sharing and interaction