



A Big Problem Facing Our Community:

Youth of color are more likely than their peers to be arrested, charged, adjudicated delinquent, and detained in a juvenile facility. The ACLU, the ACLU of Ohio, the Children's Law Center and the Office of the Ohio Public Defender are monitoring these disparities, termed "disproportionate minority contact," and released a [Report Card: Evaluating Juvenile Justice in Ohio](#).

This project is successfully addressing the following needs:

- Engage disengaged youth and their families
- Build long term positive relationships
- Hold youth accountable for their actions while preventing Juvenile Justice System involvement
- Shift school culture by peers holding each other responsible for their actions
- Provide recruitment, positive direction and support for at risk youth/families
- Strengthen youth/family relationship with LHS, police, peers, and the community
- Increase parental involvement and community contribution
- Provide hands on learning of the Justice System
- Provide leadership and educational opportunities

Disengaged youth are more likely to get into trouble. Youth who have been involved with the Juvenile Justice System are more likely to enter the Adult Correctional System. The Time Bank Youth Court program has been developed over the past seven years based on models located with a long history in (1) [Washington, D.C.](#), (2) [Dane County, WI](#), and (3) [Bethlehem, PA](#). **It integrates principles such as restorative justice, reciprocity, social networking, respect, focusing on personal strengths rather than deficits, and redefining work with well-researched lessons regarding youth development, resiliency, peer support and mentoring.**

This model is designed to intervene with youth whose behavior has shown that they are at risk of criminality which would normally result in their referral to the juvenile justice system. **By interacting with community law enforcement in constructive ways, experiencing judgment by their youth peers, working with community members, and responding positively over a 60-day period, young people are able to avoid acquiring a juvenile record. In popular language, they can "turn their life around."**

Our Audience:

The school district, the police department, and the TimeBank work together to provide an

alternative for youth who would be receiving citations for their behavior. This collaboration provides a new tool for police officers and school staff, which focuses on a restorative and strength based approach for handling youth behavior in the schools. It helps to strengthen the relationship between youth, families, and the police as well as re-engages youth in their community and school in a more positive way

The Causes of the Problem:

To build an informed and effective citizenry, prepared to deal with the crises of everyday life, more schools, local and state governments, and communities are searching for ways to provide civic engagement programming for youth. [A Path to Civic Engagement](#), September 2003

Strategies/Methods:

We begin our partnership by doing a small community based youth court pilot. We would focused on one specific neighborhood and have neighborhood officers referring appropriate youth to the youth court. We will record specific data to start with allowing the project to be more contained and easier to measure in terms of effectiveness. It's anticipated that the police write a significant number of tickets in the area high schools, so we hope to explore moving our community based youth court program into other high schools. We plan talking about the needs of each organization as well as our capacity. If it is apparent that all parties felt the best approach is additional youth courts, we would explore locations.

Short-Term Results:

Eligible youth are redirected into the Time Bank Youth Court at the point of arrest by police officers at each school, prior to being entered into the formal juvenile justice system, giving offenders the option of avoiding a juvenile record. The referred youth's case is then heard by a trained jury of his or her peers. The jury gives a sentence using restorative justice principles, and the respondent has 60 days to complete the program. If he or she is successful, no arrest record is created by the Police Department and nothing appears on their record. **This model promotes leadership development, long-term positive relationships, and recreational, service, skill-building and economic opportunities for teens and their families. It provides a social framework and activities that help divert a youth from disruptive or anti-social activities.**

Medium-Term Results:

By allowing offending youth to receive a meaningful sanction from a jury of their peers rather than incarceration or further punishment, Youth Courts have been shown to be cost-efficient prevention and intervention strategies throughout the country. Participation in Youth Courts has been demonstrated to reduce recidivism rates while helping young people develop positive connections to their community. **A Youth Court also provides non-offending youth the chance to gain knowledge of the legal system, develop leadership skills, public speaking skills, and ongoing positive relationships with adults and peers, and get involved more directly with their school and community.** All participants learn the value of reciprocity and have the experience of helping others.

Through the TimeBank, such understanding and self-efficacy is enhanced through service to others. At the conclusion of the youth's sentence, youth are given the option to continue participation and earn TimeBank Hours for their service. **The transition from mandated services to involvement in the TimeBank sustains the benefits of the Youth Court experience.** Sentences are specifically designed to encourage this.

Long-Term Impacts:

The project has been successful in achieving the following program goals/objectives:

Goals/outcome objectives for referred youth:

- Diverting youth from the formal Juvenile Justice system into a community-based network that provides tools needed for success and holds youth accountable to their peers, school, and those wronged by their offense.
- Experiencing being “judged” by peers introduces positive peer pressure, resulting in the offender feeling more accountable and their consequences more meaningful. Youth become more aware of how their actions affect those around them and are less likely to make the same mistake again. This has led to fewer tickets written, fewer disciplinary problems, and a safer school environment.
- Maintaining an ongoing relationship with youth. This helps avoid recidivism by connecting youth with members of their community and their school through skill-building, leadership development and other positive activities.

Goals/outcome objectives for all participants:

- Engaging disengaged youth/families by increasing the number of youth/families who are actively involved in volunteering, service learning or other contributing roles in their homes, schools and communities. Demonstrating active linkages established to their community, school, and peers and maintaining these positive relationships.
- Increasing the number of young people providing assistance to other youth.
- Breaking down social barriers and increasing positive interaction of youth from different ethnic, geographic, or socio-economic backgrounds, including youth from different social groups within the school or surrounding neighborhoods.
- Providing leadership opportunities, skills and rewards for participating in the governance, program development or evaluation of the Youth Court.
- Providing opportunities, skills and support that strengthen the youth's ability to obtain employment or further education.
- Strengthening participants relationship with the law enforcement, school officials, and other authorities.

References:

- [Time Bank Youth Court, one page](#)
- [Youth Court Flow Chart](#)
- [Madison La Follette Youth Court/Restorative Justice Panels](#)
- [JUVENILE DETENTION REFORM INITIATIVE SPARKING A “VIBRANT NATIONAL MOVEMENT”](#)
- [Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System](#)
- [Racial Disparity in Juvenile Justice and Deliberate Indifference](#)
- [Five Year Look at Participation in the Time Dollar Youth Diversion](#)
- [How the Juvenile Justice System Reduces Life Options of Minority Youth](#)