



Youth Voices in Action

Youth summit Report 2024

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Edited by Janelle Astorga Ramos



About Youth Voices in Action - VIA

Our mission Statement

- Youth of different ages collectively coming together to speak up, be heard and make changes in our education system to fit the needs of everyone.

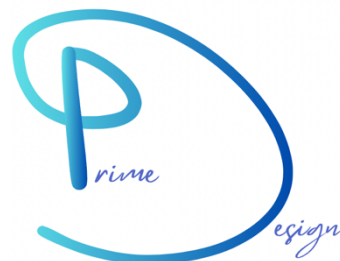
Our vision

- We work to create student-led training and campaigns that will help eliminate inequalities in the education system and incorporate student choices in decision making at Albuquerque Public Schools (APS).

Our campaigns are made by youth for youth, Learn more at YouthVoicesInAction.com

Thank you to our partners:

- TNTP
- The Semilla Project
- The Learning Alliance of NM
- APS Office of Equality & Engagement
- Shirts designed by
 - Erick Serrano & printed by Prime Design LLC



What is the Youth Summit?

Youth Voices in action, also known as VIA, has been empowering youth since 2015. VIA was founded after the Albuquerque PARCC walkouts by Albuquerque Public School students and has since been a part of building students leadership skills in the area of social justice and specifically education and Youth Rights. The main goal of the VIA Student Led Youth Summit is to provide students with training and workshops that will develop them as leaders, public speaking and students who understand the root causes of inequalities within the education system. The youth summit allows for a space where youth come together to talk openly about things they would like to see change inside their schools without being tokenized or ignored. VIA focuses on encouraging students, specifically students of color, who are not surrounded by academic or personal support, to be able to see their own potential and to develop those skills necessary to lead campaigns to make change in their schools because we believe those who are directly affected by an unjust education system have the ultimate power to create change. When youth are empowered they can create change, those changes work as a domino effect for other students to also become leaders. All they need is a space to do so. That's why VIA, as students, Created the student-led youth summit.

This year's summit was held at the Berna Facio Professional Development Center, This also marks VIA's seventh year coordinating a student-led summit for the Albuquerque Public Schools district. This year the summit was held in September so that we can do better recruiting for students so that they could stay involved in our program for a longer period of time. Unlike the past year, this year we had 4 Middle schools and 2 High schools included in the summit.

This year's summit theme was 'illuminating change: Shining light on youth empowerment'. We chose this theme because gun violence was identified as the top concern by VIA youth in their community. this year, we chose to focus on preventive measures and explore solutions that youth people can contribute to addressing this issue, which has had a profound impact, particularly on the youth in Albuquerque.



**Illuminated Change:
Shining Light on
Youth Empowerment**

Workshops

1- Organizing 101

Students learned about ways to create change in their school while using community organizing and social justice skills. They also talked about other youth movements that have created lasting changes.



2-Gun Safety: NM to Prevent Gun Violence

This workshop provided youth with important information on gun safety and highlights VIA's youth Gun violence prevention campaign.

3- Mental Health, Meditation and Martial Arts

This workshop focused on enhancing our well-being throughout destressing and healing practices. Participants were introduced to yoga for peace, using breathwork and movements to nature, the mind and body. Tai Chi, an internal martial art was also explored, emphasizing vitality through coordinated movements, breathing and meditation.



4-Youth Justice 101

In this workshop, youth learned about student rights and the history of youth justice. They also engaged in an activity exploiting the juvenile justice system and the school-to-prison pipeline.

Teacher Workshop



This year our teacher workshop was centered around giving teachers and staff a space to speak amongst themselves around their experiences within the education system while also receiving a debrief of the New Mexico legislative session, the Yazzie v. Martinez lawsuit and a NM Public Education Department update from our partner Transform Education New Mexico.

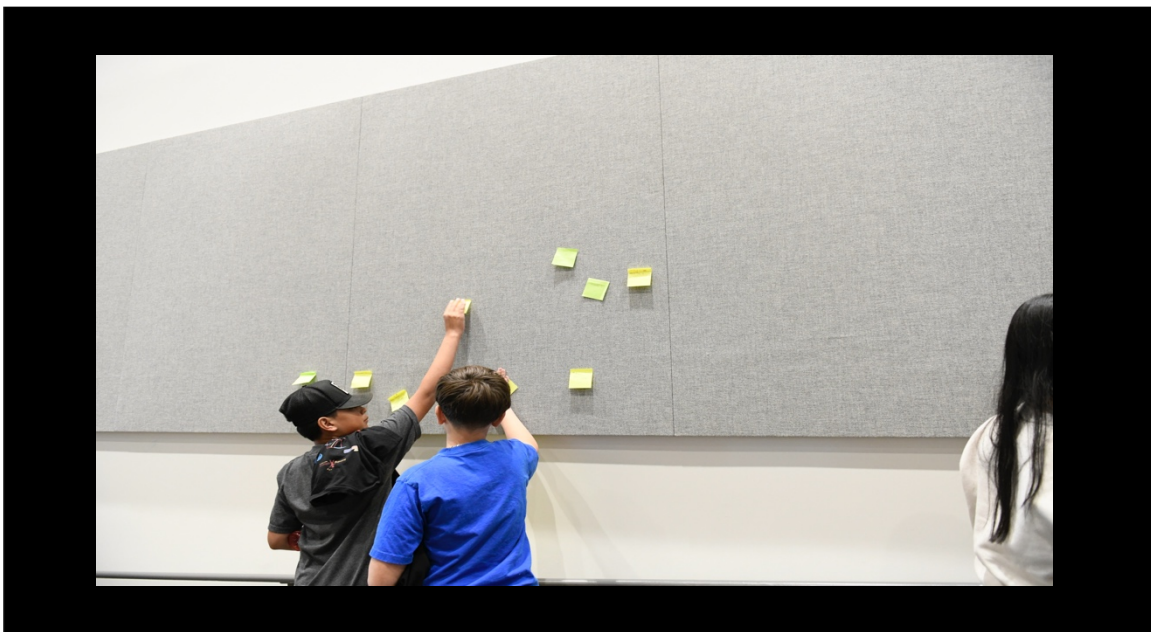


Teachers loved this workshop and also signed up for our follow up workshops throughout the year.

Wall of Burning Issues

At the Summit, we conducted an activity called “The Wall of Burning Issues,” where students wrote down issues they care deeply about on sticky notes. Afterward, we reviewed all the notes and grouped them into categories for potential future campaigns that VIA could address.

The table below outlines the campaigns students would like VIA to focus on moving forward. Additionally, we’ve included a photo of some other issues that were also raised.



Wall of Burning Issues Cont.

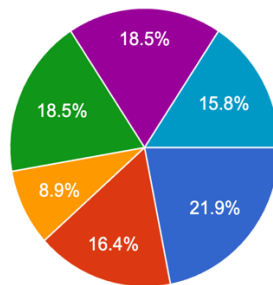
| <u>Area of Issue</u> | <u>Issue</u> | <u>Campaign</u> |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Dress codes | Restrictive or unclear dress code may lead to unnecessary discipline of self-expression | Update dress codes to be inclusive flexible, and respectful to diverse cultures, while maintaining focus in the educational environment. |
| Better Lunches | School lunches lack nutrients and are not a healthy source of food and students do not have enough time to eat and decompress | Provide more balanced nutritious meal options , and increase lunch periods to allow students to eat comfortably. |
| Longer Passing Periods | Students do not have enough time to get from one class to another as well as use the restroom or rest causing stress and tardiness | Extend passing periods slightly to ensure students have enough time move between classes and use the time as needed |
| Youth Justice System | The youth justice system disproportionately punishes youth, specifically youth of color. | Focus on rehabilitation and restorative justice rather than punitive measures, with a greater emphasis on education, mental health support, and reintegration. |
| Immigration Issues | Undocumented students and families are facing more challenges and fear because of the new federal policies | Schools need policies and spaces that support immigrant rights/ rights for undocumented families, provide legal resources and create inclusive educational programs for all. |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Mental Health | The school district does not support the mental health of students or teachers | Allocate funding for mental health resources and provide relaxation rooms in schools to help students and teachers decompress |
| Ethnic Studies | Students do not feel represented or connected to their curriculum which causes truancy and apathy | Improving the introduction of Ethnic Studies and Social Justice topics into school curriculum and raising more awareness of the students' rights to cultural representation in curriculum |
| Gun Violence | Gun violence is increasing amongst youth in New Mexico | Work with APS to create better and functioning systems of protective measures along with general public awareness of the issues affecting our schools. |
| Racism and discrimination | Stopping discrimination, sexism, racism, genderism etc. between students & students and students & teachers | Workshops and student forums to determine what's really going on/ More teacher trainings |
| Bullying | Students are facing in-person and online bullying causing students to become unengaged and truant | Create spaces where students can feel supported and creating an accountability system where bullies can get the support they need to understand why they engage in those actions |

Demographics of attendees

What School are you with?

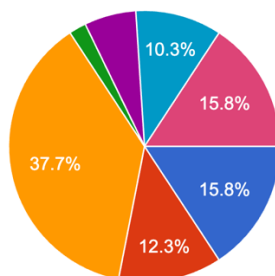
146 responses



- Ernie Pyle MS
- George I. Sanchez
- Washington Middle School
- Polk Middle School
- Rio Grande High School
- Atrisco Heritage Academy

What grade are you currently in?

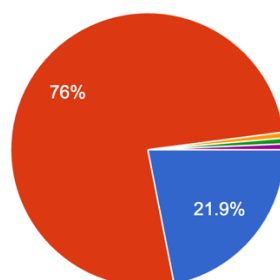
146 responses



- 6th Grade
- 7th Grade
- 8th Grade
- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

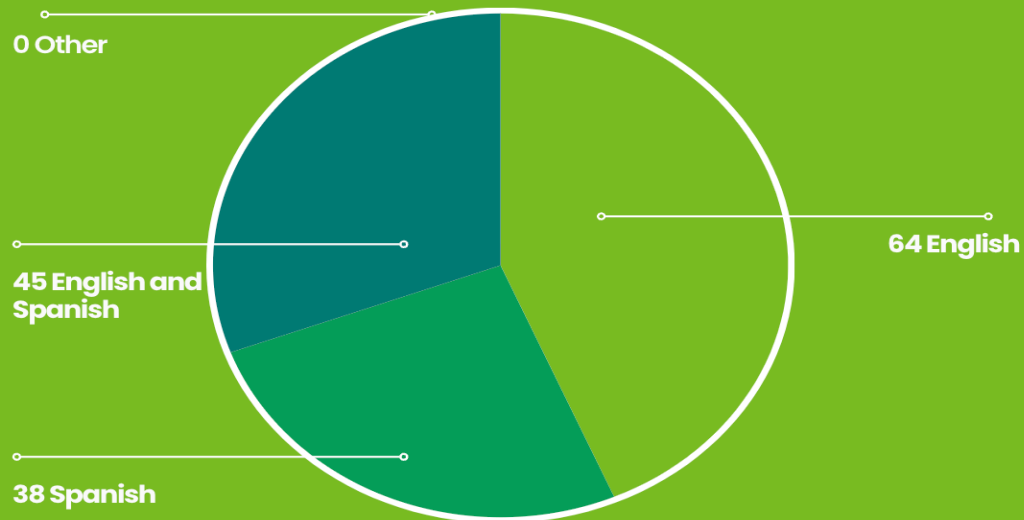
What Gender do you identify with?

146 responses



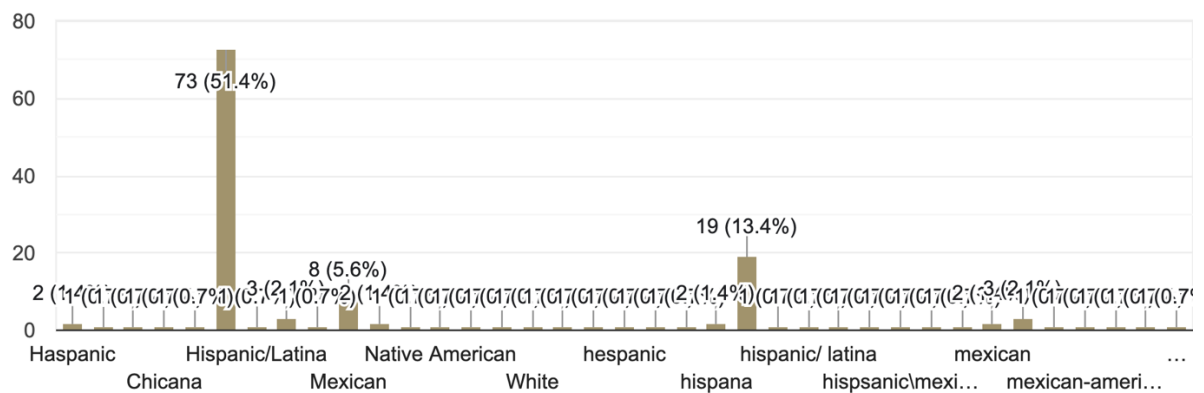
- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary
- skibidi toilet
- batman

What language do you speak at home?



What is your ethnicity?

142 responses



A huge thank you to all the schools involved!!

Schools

- George I Sanchez Community School
- Polk Middle School
- Ernie Pyle Middle School
- Washington Middle School
- Rio Grande High School
- Atrisco Heritage Academy

For more information about VIA or the Youth Summit please contact Janelle@la-nm.org or Isabella@la-nm.org .