

Documenting Out-of-School Time Learning: Opportunities, Tensions, and a Prototype

Barry Fishman, University of Michigan, fishman@umich.edu
 Leslie Rupert Herrenkohl, University of Michigan, leslierh@umich.edu
 Nichole Pinkard, Northwestern University, nichole.pinkard@northwestern.edu
 Katie Headrick Taylor, University of Washington, kht126@uw.edu
 Lauren Cardella, Mastery Transcript Consortium, cardella@mastery.org
 Steven Cederquist, University of Michigan, cedsteve@umich.edu
 Xingjian Gu, University of Michigan, xjgu@umich.edu
 Denise Jones, University of Michigan, jonesdee@umich.edu
 Jiyoung Lee, University of Washington, jiyoungl@uw.edu
 Lo Lee, University of Michigan, lololee@umich.edu
 Yolanda Majors, The Hurston Group, yolandamajors@hurstongroup.com
 Alex Samuelson, The Hurston Group, alexsam@hurstongroup.com

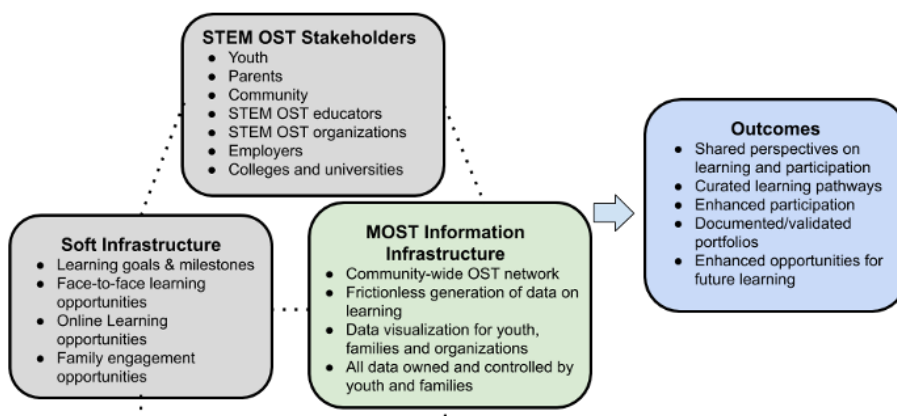
Abstract: This poster explores a method for documenting learning in out-of-school-time (OST) settings such that the values of youth and OST providers are preserved and highlighted. OST learning documentation can serve a variety of purposes, including as evidence of college readiness. The poster presents a prototype of a personal learning record for OST learning and discusses tensions and opportunities for such a record of learning and explores key tensions in creating such a representation.

Introduction

There are many reasons to document youth learning in out-of-school time (OST) or informal settings. These include helping guide youth to future learning opportunities, helping youth pursue work, or as part of pursuing future formal education such as college (Keune et al., 2022). Such documentation could also be valuable to OST organizations, both for program improvement and for obtaining funding. There are also a range of tensions that emerge from the process of attempting to document youth OST learning. What counts as learning? What kinds of knowledge are privileged? And how do we avoid damaging the motivations youth have for engaging in OST activities with the addition of formal assessment and documentation of learning (Torrance, 2012)?

This poster presents work-in-progress from an NSF-funded project exploring the documentation of learning in OST contexts as part of expanding college access. The poster contains a prototype record of learning intended to be used alongside traditional college application materials. It also describes the research on OST learning used to inform the prototype and invites discussion of pathways forward in this design space. A goal of the project is to center and elevate an OST STEM learning ecosystem (Pinkard, 2019) in which the views, values, and goals of different stakeholders are valued and represented (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
An OST STEM Learning Ecosystem

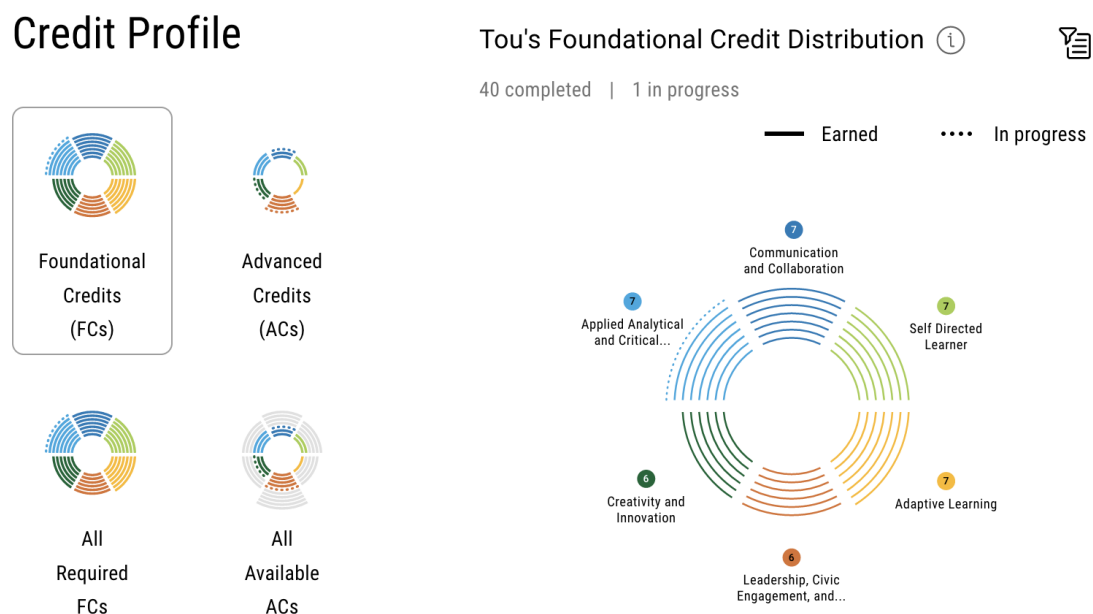


Design of the study

This project explores the learning experienced by youth in three different OST contexts, selected in part for their divergent goals and *modus operandi*. One is a community-based program in the U.S. Pacific Northwest for mixed income, refugee, and immigrant youth. Another is a middle-grades coding program in the U.S. Midwest designed to enhance learner self-concept around computing. And the third is a university-sponsored college preparatory program in the U.S. Midwest designed to enrich learning for high school students and prepare them for success in higher education. To investigate learning, we interviewed both youth and their caregivers and OST providers. We also interviewed college admissions personnel from a broad range of institutions to understand how they currently view OST learning and how different representations of OST learning might elevate its role in the college admissions process. Using inductive coding, we investigated each of these interviews to surface themes and patterns. We then shared these observations with OST youth, families, and providers to understand how they recognized their learning in our data, and with college admissions personnel to understand how they might view our data about learning in their work. From here, the project team worked with our partner the [redacted for review], an organization focused on the development of mastery-based transcripts for use in formal K-12 education, to extend their transcript concept into the OST space. This prototype (see Figure 2), which we refer to as a personal learning record instead of a transcript, was then shown to OST providers to see if they viewed it as useful and representative of their activities, with youth and families, to see if they viewed it as representative of their values and learning, and with college admissions personnel to see if they viewed it as useful in their holistic review processes. Detailed findings and a discussion of the tensions described above are presented in the poster.

Figure 2

A prototype personal learning record for OST learning



References

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