



Sprockets Initiative & Problem Solving Training



SPROCKETS

**BUILDING
STRONG
PROGRAMS**

ABOUT SPROCKETS

Sprockets is a network of many different afterschool and summer programs for youth in Saint Paul. It is a collaboration of community organizations, the City of Saint Paul, and Saint Paul Public Schools.

Our vision: All Saint Paul's youth will develop their abilities as learners, contributors, and navigators so they can recognize and achieve their greatest potential.

Our mission: Sprockets improves the quality, availability, and effectiveness of out-of-school time learning for all youth in Saint Paul through the committed, collaborative, and innovative efforts of community organizations, government, schools, and other partners.



Sprockets The Power of Play Training provided by Playworks

BUILDING STRONGER PROGRAMS

Afterschool program quality matters. Strong programs that are safe and supportive – where youth have a sense of belonging and are engaged in meaningful opportunities – can have life-changing impacts on young people. Research shows that it is better for youth to do nothing at all than to participate in low-quality programs.¹

What does quality look like? Quality is creating structured and intentional programming. It's being committed to training and supporting youth workers and learning best practices. It's consistently improving programs to create valuable, life-changing experiences for young people.

THAT'S WHERE SPROCKETS MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

Because high-quality programs lead to better outcomes for youth, Sprockets elevates youth program quality in Saint Paul by providing professional development for youth workers and helping programs continuously improve.

Training Youth Workers

Sprockets trains youth workers through practical and responsive professional development. Through our trainings, youth workers learn how to provide a safe and supportive environment, to foster youth voice, and to build social and emotional skills. Sprockets trains supervisors to coach their staff, creating environments where front-line youth workers are supported and challenged to do better. When youth workers strengthen their practice, they are better equipped to help young people succeed.

Sprockets plays the crucial role of supporting the youth workers who support our youth. It provides a shared language and framework for youth work in Saint Paul, and brings together professionals to share knowledge and best practices. I didn't even identify as a youth worker until I moved to Saint Paul six years ago, but since then Sprockets has helped me learn, grow, and lead in my work with youth programs and youth workers.

– Julie Richards, Saint Paul youth worker and Sprockets Leadership Group member

¹Belle, D. The After-School Lives of Children: Alone and With Others While Parents Work. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1999.

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2016-2017 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BY THE NUMBERS

2016-2017 Sprockets Trainings

- Intro to the Active Participatory Approach
- Quality Coaching x2
- Getting the Most Out of the Sprockets Shared Data System
- Restorative Practice in SPPS
- Social-Emotional Learning Push Practice
- Empathy & Emotion Management
- Initiative and Problem-Solving
- Introduction to the Clover Framework
- YPQA as a Self-Assessment
- Sprockets Summer Institute

37

youth workers and supervisors attended Quality Coaching

161

youth workers attended other Sprockets trainings

154

youth workers attended the Summer Institute

97%

of participants learned concepts and techniques at Sprockets trainings that will help them in their work.



Fred Wells Tennis & Education Center staff at M³ day

CONTINUOUS PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT: THE SPROCKETS ACTIVATOR CYCLE

Sprockets also encourages our partner organizations to continuously improve the programs they offer young people – to collect data to figure out what is working well and how to set goals for improvement.

This is challenging work, and we support our partners at every step of the way. **Sprockets' Activator Improvement Cycle** helps partners ASSESS-PLAN-IMPROVE their programs. Sprockets provides access to assessment tools like the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) as well as tools to measure their program's impact. Once programs collect data, they bring it to **Sprockets' M³: Making Meaning of Multiple Data Sets** workshop, where we walk them through the process of using data to determine what is working well and what can be improved. Then we help them see how to adjust programs to be even better. Finally, Sprockets' range of professional development and peer learning opportunities support programs and youth workers as they work to continuously improve.

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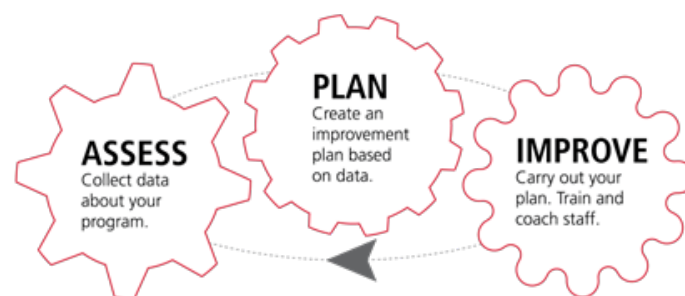
Girls Book Club at Createch at Arlington Hills Community Center

In 2016-2017, 32 organizations started the Activator Cycle. Nearly all of those organizations (30) were able to attend the quality kick-off, collect data, make improvement plans with their staff, and carry out improvements – completing the Activator Cycle. That's 30 organizations committed and equipped to intentionally improve their programs so they have bigger impacts on the youth they serve.

Youth worker training. Continuous program improvement. It all adds up to strong programs for Saint Paul youth.

2016-2017 Activator Cycle By the Numbers

30 Organizations completed the Activator Improvement Cycle



Activators use data to:

- Inform changes in day-to-day work of program
- Inform changes in overall program model/services
- Meet reporting requirements

USING DATA FOR IMPROVEMENT: CREATECH'S ACTIVATOR CYCLE STORY

Createch, a program offered by the Saint Paul Public Library, is a space where teens can tinker. They hang out, mess around, and geek out – all of which is an evidence-based approach that allows teens to explore their passions using new tools and technology.

In 2015-2016, Createch completed the Sprockets Activator Cycle, aiming to collect and use data to figure out where they could improve their program. Createch staff collected data in three areas – they tracked Participation & Attendance using the Sprockets Shared Data System,

measured Program Quality with multiple YPQA assessments, and gathered Program Experience data using a survey for youth participants.

When they brought their multiple data sets together at Sprockets' M³ Day, it all clicked. They uncovered a problem they didn't even know that they had: girls weren't coming to Createch nearly as often as boys.

But the data also helped inform solutions: Createch staff made a plan to bring girls into the space and boost their sense of belonging and ownership in the program. Staff

created a new "Girl's Night," an event just for girls. But they also set goals around welcoming young people into the space, supporting youth as they build new skills, and fostering trusted and sustained relationships with youth – quality practices that keep young people engaged and coming back.

And it has worked. Girls started coming to Createch more often and getting engaged in different activities like recording and video games. The staff plan to keep using attendance data, youth survey results, and YPQA observations to track the impact of their efforts.

"Collecting data will make Createch stronger," said Marika Staloch, Youth Programs Coordinator. "And Sprockets' supports and Activator Cycle process help our staff use that data in a smart way to make Createch a more welcoming place."

Going through the Activator Cycle and bringing together three data sets helped Createch set informed and intentional program improvement goals – goals that will strengthen their program and help even more young people build new skills and explore their passions.

WHAT'S NEXT? SETTING NETWORK GOALS TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENT

We know our partners provide valuable, life-changing opportunities for young people. But there's ALWAYS room for improvement. We invite youth workers to attend trainings to learn, grow, and improve their practice. We ask programs to continuously improve by collecting data in new areas and using it to strengthen their programs.

But we're also challenging ourselves as a network to keep building strong programs across Saint Paul. We're asking ourselves:

- How can we gain a deeper understanding of Saint Paul youth programs, youth workers, and their needs in order to better support them to improve and grow?
- How can we best demonstrate that participating in the Sprockets network and using Sprockets' supports is impacting programs?

To begin to study and answer these questions, we're developing new ways of measuring how partners use Sprockets supports – and we've set some network-wide goals to challenge ourselves to do better and go deeper.

Sprockets will keep investing in youth workers in Saint Paul, to support their investment in young people. And we'll keep finding innovative ways to support organizations no matter their size or capacity. We'll support more partners to complete the Activator Cycle, and to go deeper in the Cycle. And we hope you, as Saint Paul funders, parents, youth workers, programs, and organizations, will help our network reach these goals and show that our work really matters. Because strong programs lead to successful youth and successful youth lead to a stronger city for all.

HELP SPROCKETS REACH OUR NETWORK GOALS

Training

- By June 2018, Sprockets will provide training for 350 youth workers annually (35% increase).

Continuous Program Improvement

- In the 2017-2018 Activator Cycle, 35 partner organizations will participate in the Activator Cycle.
- In the 2017-2018 Activator Cycle, Sprockets will double the number of YPQA assessments provided to our network.
- In the 2018-2019 Activator Cycle, Sprockets will double the number of programs/sites collecting all four sets of data as part of the Activator Cycle.

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