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Student Action Research: Reaping the Benefits for Students and School Leaders

Beth C. Rubin and Makeba Jones

Recent years have seen a proliferation of student action research both nationally and internationally. Going by various names—participatory research, action research, participatory evaluation—student action research is research that (a) is conducted by youth, within or outside of schools and classrooms, with the goal of informing and affecting school, community, and/or global problems and issues and (b) contributes to the positive development of a variety of academic, social, and civic skills in youth. This article reviews research and writing on student action research, describing different types of student action research initiatives, the benefits of this powerful practice, and how principals can manage implementation challenges.

Keywords: *action research; student voice; school reform; youth empowerment; youth development; civic engagement*

One of the first things we learned in our work with young people is how differently they frame issues from adults or administrators.
—Michelle Fine, CUNY Graduate Center faculty
("What Kids Can Do," 2004)

Recent years have seen a proliferation of student action research both nationally and internationally. Going by various names—participatory research, action research, participatory evaluation—student action research is research that (a) is conducted by youth, within or outside of schools and classrooms, with the goal of informing and affecting school, community, and/or global problems and issues and (b) contributes to the positive development of a variety of academic, social, and civic skills in youth (Park, 1993; Sabo, 2003). Many, not all, youth-led, participatory research and evaluation projects share a social activist stance (Powers & Tiffany, 2006). At its best, student action research engages youth, particularly underrepresented

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and disadvantaged youth, in critical exploration of issues that affect their lives inside and outside of school.

Unlike many youth participatory projects sponsored or organized by adults, in student action research, students participate as designers of research and participants in the research; students are the researchers, not the researched. Projects can range from small-scale classroom efforts to investigations spanning numerous school districts and communities. What they all have in common is the underlying notion that involving young people in posing and answering significant questions benefits youth and the schools and communities of which they are members.

Why might school leaders be interested in encouraging student action research at their school sites? Student action research projects are clearly beneficial for students. These projects can foster useful academic and public speaking skills; offer youth important opportunities to participate in various decision-making and leadership roles; help students feel more empowered, enfranchised, and motivated to actively participate in their schools and communities; and build the social connections that can help pave the way to higher education (Park, 1993; Powers & Tiffany, 2006). But adults can benefit from student action research as well. School leaders, in particular, can reap the rewards of more direct student involvement in schoolwide issues, gaining insight into how the school is experienced by students while equipping and empowering students to participate positively in the change process. This article aims to give school leaders a sense of what student action research is and what it can accomplish, presenting an overview of the varieties and scope of the practice and its potential benefits for youth. It describes how student action research can be useful to school leaders and offers suggestions for how school leaders might implement student action research initiatives.

The Spectrum of Student Action Research Projects

Student action research includes projects that involve one or more school or community sites, and a variety of participants in addition to the youth—for example, school-based teachers, principals and district-level administrators, university faculty, community organizers, and experts from business and nonprofit sectors. These projects range from quite small—investigating the ideas of peers in one class, to very large—collecting survey responses from up to 10,000 students across school sites. Student action research projects vary in focus, with students researching issues at classroom, school, community, and societal levels. This section describes a few recent projects to illustrate the various ways that students can investigate issues in their own schools, and of ways students can research larger social issues in the community.

Students Investigating Their Own Schools

Some student action research projects we reviewed focus their investigations on classroom-level issues. In a science class, for example, a student collaborated with

her teacher to investigate student responses to conventional and unconventional approaches to science instruction. They found that students in the reformed program liked science more, felt better prepared for their science classes, and planned to take more science classes in the future (Chinn, 1998).

Many student action research projects focus on investigating and improving the school as a social and academic unit. In one California university partnership with schools serving largely underrepresented minority and low-income students, researchers coconstructed “inquiry groups” with high school students (Jones & Yonezawa, 2002). During monthly meetings on the high school campuses, the researchers met with a diverse group of 9th- to 12th-grade students and facilitated an open dialogue about their high school experiences. Researchers invited students to reflect and share their classroom experiences; that is, their relationships with their teachers, their perceptions of the quality of assignments and homework, and descriptions of teaching practices that helped students learn the subject and feel engaged in the class. From these regular, open-ended conversations with students, the university researchers and students developed presentations for the entire school faculty about the results of the student inquiry groups. Students volunteered to participate in the faculty presentations in varying degrees. Such inquiry groups can lead to specific recommendations to improve teaching and learning across subject areas that can be useful to school leaders, providing guidance, for example, about what direction a principal might take for professional development topics.

In Los Angeles, an ongoing student action research initiative sponsored by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) apprentices urban youth as “critical researchers” to “develop and carry out research projects in urban schools and communities” (Morrell, 2006, p. 112). One of the features of this project is a university-led summer research seminar for youth. During one such seminar, students developed an “Educational Bill of Rights” and then, over the course of the school year, gathered data to learn how their schools stood in relation to this Bill of Rights, assessing schools for the quality of learning opportunities they provided to students. Another year, students in the seminar developed a “School Accountability Report Card” that they used to evaluate their schools over the next academic year, gathering data from student peers.

In the New York area, researchers from the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center worked with over 100 youth from urban and suburban high schools in New York and New Jersey to assess racial equality in schools 50 years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation decision (Torre & Fine, 2006). Diverse students learned research techniques at summer research camps and developed surveys that they administered to over 10,000 students at their schools. They presented their data analyses to a wide variety of audiences. Their artistic, performance-based responses are compiled on a DVD, *Echoes of Brown: Youth Documenting and Performing the Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education* (Fine, Roberts, & Torre, 2004).

The Student Action Research for University Access (SARUA) project in Australia features disadvantaged high school students working with university teachers and staff to “investigate factors preventing students from their backgrounds participating in higher education” and “plan, carry out and evaluate activities needed to bridge the gap between their schools and higher education” (SARUA, 2007). In California, Youth Rising, a multiracial organizing group, met two afternoons a week and received stipends to organize student clubs at their schools (Kirshner, 2006). This group decided the youth drop-out rate was the “most pressing problem” faced by youth at local high schools. They embarked on a student action research project, having their peers fill out “report cards” to evaluate all aspects of their school. The students collected 950 report cards, analyzed the data statistically, and found that two thirds of students wanted “greater involvement and voice in their schools” (Kirshner, 2006, p. 43). Across these projects, students turned a “researcher” eye on their own schools, investigating issues of deep concern to them with the goal of informing stakeholders and encouraging positive change in the lives of youth.

Students Investigating Larger Social Issues in the Community

Student action research projects can also offer a powerful focus on community issues. In a New Jersey middle school, the entire school took part in an investigation of the community’s history during the civil rights era. The result was a book, *Keeping the Struggle Alive: Studying Desegregation in Our Town*, that documents the community’s struggle for integration and provides a model for other schools to engage in similar investigations (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002). In the Opportunity Gap and Echoes of Brown projects, in New York, young people from a variety of schools and backgrounds came together to assess racial equality in schools 50 years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation decision (Torre & Fine, 2006).

Nonprofit and community-oriented organizations around the country have a tradition of working with youth on the ground to investigate a range of educational, social, and economic issues. Youth participation in community-related evaluation activities, in particular, is a growing endeavor by community groups and foundations. O’Donoghue (2006), for example, described two community-based youth organizations “aimed at engaging traditionally marginalized urban youth in community change” (p. 231). These organizations involved youth community projects, such as the development of a charter high school, a radio station, and an employment program, and through giving grants to other youth organizations.

Another such effort is Youth in Focus, a nonprofit organization in northern California that conducts action research aimed at connecting youth development and community improvement through evaluative, student-led research (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003). Youth in Focus advocates the participation of multiple stakeholders in youth-led evaluation research—youth, community members,

and community organization staff. The Youth in Focus model, called Youth-Led Research, Evaluation, and Planning, or Youth REP, purports to build the knowledge, confidence, and leadership skills of youth (London et al., 2003). Through a variety of research projects in collaboration with organizations and communities, young people learn writing, research, analytic, and other academic skills, as well as speaking skills, public communication, and advocacy/civic leadership.

In one project, for example, approximately 20 youth evaluators, many of whom had experience in the juvenile justice system firsthand, evaluated the San Francisco juvenile justice system. The youth evaluators, along with adult evaluators, policy makers, and community advocates, examined the effects of San Francisco's new Juvenile Justice Action Plan—a course of action to reform the juvenile justice system by funding alternatives to prison. The evaluation team researched the needs of adolescents in targeted communities and made recommendations that influenced subsequent city juvenile delinquent programs and policies.

In a project generated through the Community Youth Research (CYR) after-school program, a partnership between the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and their Communities and city officials in Redwood City, California, students created a research study based on the question "How can Redwood City be better for youth?" They conducted interviews with peers, and in small groups, they pursued the research through surveys and video. They identified violence, lack of things to do, city disrepair, and negative attitudes toward youth as their major findings and presented their results to middle school teachers, the school board, and the city council (Kirshner, Strobel, & Fernandez, 2003). As these projects demonstrate, student action research has the potential to engage students in meaningful endeavors to improve conditions in their communities surrounding their schools.

Benefits for Students

Student action research projects can have a number of benefits for students that may be of interest to school administrators. Such projects have the potential to add value to students' schooling experiences, to schools themselves, and even to the community at large. Student action research projects can build important academic and social skills, particularly for difficult-to-reach youth. They can also help students gain access to higher education, add valuable information to school reform efforts, and help foster civic identity among students that connects youth to their communities, revitalizing the civic purposes of education. Although these benefits have not been subject to systematic empirical study, a review of key examples will illuminate the potential of student action research.

Building Important Academic Skills

Student action research projects can help students build a powerful range of academic skills because they are embedded in purposeful and authentic work that connects

with students' lives in educationally positive ways, regardless of their backgrounds and achievement level. In project after project, students from a variety of circumstances and with a range of schooling experiences learn how to pose and answer meaningful and sophisticated questions. They learn, for example, how to frame a research project, collect data through surveys and interviews, and how to analyze quantitative and qualitative data. They learn how to present findings to various audiences in various ways: through written reports; "chalk talks"; performance-based renditions; and presentations to teacher groups, school boards, and city councils.

In a previously mentioned project, for example, students administered and collected over 950 "report cards" on the schools in their district that they analyzed statistically, creating findings to present to the school board (Kirshner, 2006). In a UNICEF initiative, five youth researchers in Bosnia worked with adult researchers to learn how to plan and conduct meetings, write research reports, and recruit at-risk young people from three towns to participate in the HIV/AIDS prevention/intervention initiative (Powers & Tiffany, 2006).

Students recognize the importance of these skills and gain confidence in themselves as capable of critical thinkers. As a student participant in Australia's SARUA project reflected,

Well, looking at the first draft of the final report, I sat there looking at it thinking, "We couldn't have done this!" It was the biggest thrill to look at it and say "That is mine!" . . . It has boosted my self-esteem a lot. I'm very proud of myself for this and I feel very capable of undertaking a project so large, like, I'd be willing to do it again just to see if it would actually turn out like this again, but I feel very capable. (SARUA, 2007)

Along with the valuable academic skills that are learned and reinforced by such projects, this is the very sort of self-competence and confidence educators yearn to develop in students.

Engaging Disenfranchised Youth

Student action research projects can galvanize at-risk, disenfranchised youth and engage them in meaning-rich activities that connect them to their own learning and the educational process. Unlike efforts that focus only on "remediating" youth, student action research projects ask students to cover new ground by investigating issues of critical importance to them, and in the process, they develop high-level thinking skills, for instance, with support from adults on the projects. In so doing, students can develop broader analyses of the forces affecting their lives and their education, they get to voice their concerns and opinions about issues they select, and they learn how to think proactively about possible solutions.

Student action research projects can engage students that many consider to be hard to reach, for example, students at continuation schools (Kelly, 1993; Nygreen, 2006) and students living in poor, urban areas (Duncan-Andrade, 2006; Morrell, 2006), in creative academic endeavors. In one student action research project, high school students from South Central Los Angeles created videos of their critiques of urban schooling inequality (Duncan-Andrade, 2006). These students were motivated by the relevance of the issues they were investigating and the medium of presentation to engage in difficult topics uncovered through the projects. In another project, students at a continuation high school developed a course on civic issues for their peers (Nygreen, 2006).

Building Social Capital

The process of participating in a student action research project can also help to bolster the opportunities of disadvantaged youth who have limited access to the social capital—that is, family and community resources, college-preparatory experiences and connections—that typically facilitate access to higher education for more privileged youth. Many student action research projects bring students onto university campuses, putting them into contact with university faculty. Morrell (2006) described a student action research project in Los Angeles that brought students onto the local public university campus for summer research seminars. The participating students gained access to critical analytic and literacy skills, and to high-status people such as university professors and researchers. Such experiences can help students develop academic and social skills and provide social networking opportunities not readily available to students whose families have not traditionally had access to higher education.

Student action research projects that engage marginalized youth in a critique of larger social inequalities can help them to situate their own struggles and pursuits for higher education within a broader framework and gain perspective about their self-doubts. The SARUA project in Australia, for example, aims “to increase the participation of youth from target disadvantaged groups into higher education” by involving youth from these groups in projects that investigate barriers to higher education and identify ways to overcome these barriers (Atweh & Bland, 1998, p. 1). A project leader writes,

Being involved with this project made a world of difference to the students directly involved with the project. It also had a ripple effect through the rest of the school, most powerfully felt by the peer groups of the students involved. I have now watched several years of students applying for higher education and succeeding, taking along with them their friends. Some of our ex-students who made it into university became part of university based support group for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Our first graduates entered the workforce last year and some still visit the school for mentoring purposes, thus keeping the spirit of SARUA alive. (SARUA, 2007)

A student participant in the SARUA project writes,

What benefited me the most was learning research skills, learning about university life and all of the positives and negatives about university . . . alternative entries into university and knowing that the report I have participated in will help future Polynesian students for years to come. (SARUA, 2007)

Similarly, students in the Futures Project in Southern California investigated tracking in school and developed an analysis of tracking barriers. In so doing, these students developed skills, confidence, social capital, and a critical analysis of how schools structure opportunity—valuable attributes for gaining entry to, and participation in, higher education (Collatos & Morrell, 2003).

Developing Empowered Civic Identities

Research on youth civic identity, that is, their sense of themselves as citizens, finds that young people’s sense of themselves as citizens takes shape amid the interconnected contexts and environments of classroom, school, and community (Nasir & Kirshner, 2003; Rubin, 2007; Youniss, McClellan, & Yates, 1997). Students’ daily experiences, both as individuals and as members of groups, affect their understanding and connection to civic life and their sense of civic efficacy in the world generally. One of the most profound benefits of student action research is that it can help to foster awareness and empowered civic identities in youth.

Students who seem disengaged at school may be disengaged from civic life as well, perhaps in response to a gap perceived between U.S. ideals and the realities of their lives. As Kirshner et al. (2003) noted, “For youth growing up in neighborhoods and schools with insufficient resources, meaningful democratic participation often involves a critical analysis of structural forces and power” (p. 2). Ginwright and James (2002) argued that an analysis of power in social relationships may be key to fostering optimism about social change in urban youth of color. Student action research projects can provide the opportunity for students to engage in such critical analyses.

In one student action research project at a continuation high school already discussed in this article, students’ action research goals were to “study and address the social issues affecting the lives and education” of the school’s students. After conducting their research, these students surprised their adult coresearcher by deciding to develop and teach a year-long class to their peers about civic issues and action, demonstrating their own sense of civic engagement and their desire to raise the engagement level of their peers (Nygren, 2006). Projects that “teach young people how to gather information about the needs and resources for youth and how to use that information to influence policy at a local level” (Kirshner et al., 2003, p. 3) can increase students’ sense of civic interest and efficacy—the sense that they can be

effective civic actors. When students create and present data to adults, advocating for positive change, they become civic participants in a meaningful way. Many student action research projects engage students in civic issues, facilitating and demonstrating students' growing sense of investment in civic life (e.g., Kirshner, 2006; O'Donoghue, 2006; Torre & Fine, 2006).

Such projects are powerful tools for orienting students toward civic purposes on both local and global scales. The previously described project in which middle school student researchers investigated the history of their community during the civil rights and school desegregation era engaged the entire school in a deep consideration of the civic purposes of education (Anand et al., 2002). Internationally, UNICEF hosted a global program in 14 countries in 2001-2003, called, "What every adolescent has a right to know" (Right to Know). Participating adolescents worked with adults to use participatory action research strategies to examine the impact of HIV/AIDS on the lives of youth and the communities in which they live, providing youth with an opportunity to develop their intellect and capabilities and influence global communication about HIV/AIDS (Powers & Tiffany, 2006). Such projects meld education with its civic purposes in a way that benefits the youth who are directly involved and the larger society.

Benefits for School Leaders

Beyond the benefits for students, student action research has many potential benefits for school leaders. As Michelle Fine notes, students frame issues quite differently from school administrators (What Kids Can Do, 2004). The opportunity to consider school issues from this often-overlooked vantage point can be beneficial, revealing aspects of school life that go unnoticed by adults but are significant to the students who the school aims to serve. School leaders increasingly recognize the value of including students' perspectives in arenas that previously were "adults-only," with students in many schools "participating in decisions about school programming, finances, activities, and even hiring" (Fiscus, 2005, p. 22).

Smith, Petralia, and Hewitt (2005) described students as "an untapped source of creative ideas for improving their schools," noting that "they can offer recommendations for how to improve instruction and restructure the school to increase the level of student interest and participation" (p. 28). Student action research projects are a structured way to harness this energy and creativity for the benefit of the larger school community. One model for this is the "student coresearcher" model. Student coresearchers are high school students who are engaged in an authentic study of a relevant educational issue at their school site. The student coresearchers design and conduct their own study and then present the research findings to various audiences, such as school administrators, faculty, parents, and other students at the school. In this work, students are actively engaged in school reform endeavors, and their

research supports the efforts of adults to continuously improve the school and classrooms (Yonezawa & Jones, 2007a).

In another example, students in a Minneapolis/St. Paul civics class also set out to learn from their peers what might help address the dismal high school graduation rate at their school, where less than half of ninth graders graduated in 4 years. Through their research with students, they found that young people wanted more voice in their schools, smaller schools, increased community feeling throughout the school, and more positive student-teacher relationships (What Kids Can Do, 2004). Such findings echo throughout the literature, with many youth research groups finding that students long for improvements in their relationships with teachers, a closer sense of community at their school, more choice throughout the educational process, and an improved school environment (Black, 2006; Yonezawa & Jones, 2006, 2007b).

Student contributions to school improvement efforts are not without their challenges, however. In the Indianapolis project, school administrators were less than thrilled with the students' findings and reluctant to "consider the students' positions that it would take more than simply downsizing to combat the high dropout rate and low achievement" (What Kids Can Do, 2004). In another project, student researchers at a continuation high school investigated school problems, but their recommendations (e.g., replace suspension with peer mediation for minor discipline infractions) were not palatable to school leaders (Kelly, 1993). The gap between student recommendations and adult perspectives on what is necessary and possible can be large, and student action research must be implemented with careful consideration of a number of key issues, some of which are outlined below.

Suggestions for Implementation

The key to a successful student action research experience is in careful implementation. This section outlines considerations for school leaders who are contemplating the use of this valuable practice.

The Right Sort of Adult Involvement

Although student action research projects put students at the center of the learning process, school leaders and teachers play an important role as well. Adult guidance and involvement in these projects can be structured in various ways. Kirshner (2006) described an effective approach to adult involvement in student action research that he calls modeling, coaching, and fading. In this approach, adults first modeled persuasive speech and problem framing, then coached the students as they practiced, but "fade" back during presentations and decisions, allowing students to take ownership of the process. A number of projects used summer research "camps," or seminars, to both train students to conduct research and read relevant critical theory, providing students with necessary skills and information without upsetting the student-driven focus that made these projects so effective (e.g., Fine et al., 2004; Morrell, 2006).

Adults involved in student action research should consider who will have the power to determine the focus of the research project—principal, teachers, or students. Whatever adults decide, it is important that they communicate with the students the rationale for the chosen research focus (e.g., student test score results or suspension rates). Adults will also need to think about how to communicate their role on the project to the student researchers. The entire team, adults and students, need to be clear about the boundaries of their role and responsibilities on the project to ensure a meaningful experience, and a sound research product. Communication throughout the project will be important to its success.

Time is an important consideration for principals. How much time you can devote to implementing student action research in your school will determine the degree of your involvement. Will you work alone with the student researchers? Will you invite teachers, or another administrator, to work with you and the students? What about parent involvement? Depending on the purpose of the research, and whether or not the projects are short term or longer term (e.g., sustained over a year or more), principals will need to decide if they can handle managing the project alone or if sustaining the impact from the research results requires greater participation of stakeholder adults.

The Nature of the Research Product

What will the end product look like? A written report? A presentation? School leaders will need to think ahead to the end of the research process where results are shared with a variety of audiences. Who might benefit from hearing the research results? Who is affected by the research? How can the data be used with different audiences to affect the school positively? Could the data become part of classroom curricula, for example, school policy, or an event for parents and school personnel?

School leaders can think of the research product as a catalyst for changing whatever topic or issue that is the focus of students' action research. Toward that end, what kind of product might best help you and the students prompt change, or, at least, prompt reflective thinking about educational changes in your school? Could the end product be a presentation by students during a professional development session for teachers, for instance? Student researchers can be a valuable resource for ideas about research products that might be powerfully engaging for youth and parent audiences.

The Extent of Social Activism

As noted earlier, the overall guiding principles for student action research include social activism and the promotion of social justice. Activism and social justice occur on a continuum throughout student action research, and adults can promote positive change of all kinds in a range of contexts, including in communities, schools, and within the classroom. Administrators should consider the socioeconomic and

racial context within and around their school community. Student action research may produce results that resonate with some adults and make others very uncomfortable. Think carefully about how you will share the results with stakeholders in your school community. Enlist the help of the student researchers and other key adults in the school community that you think could offer sage advice for talking about these often awkward and emotional topics.

The degree of adult involvement, the nature of the research product, and the extent of activism are interconnected. At the start of any student action research project, principals can facilitate conversations with the student research team and other adults on the team about these three components, using them as a way to start the process of developing the project. By doing so, members of the project, students and adults, are likely to feel they are equal coconstructors of the research and that they want to seriously invest in the collaborative work with principals. In the end, the benefits will extend beyond the research team members to the teachers, students, and parents in the larger school community.

Open Minds and Clear Communication

When students are empowered with the skills and information they need to investigate issues and problems that affect their lives, they may reach conclusions that are critical of some aspects of their educational experiences. If school leaders encourage student action research, they should expect to hear (and have shared publicly) research results that are not uniformly positive. In Indianapolis, for example, 50 students from five schools formed research teams and worked with school officials to provide input on the city's downsizing of the city's large high schools. The downsizing was being implemented as a means of addressing the district's high dropout rate. Students studied test scores and dropout rates and surveyed over 4,000 students and teachers to learn about the causes of this problem. Some principals in the district were not enthusiastic about the results:

Several administrators were wary, and some were openly skeptical. One principal removed survey results that student researchers had posted on the cafeteria walls, claiming that the findings "disturbed the faculty." Others refused to consider the students' positions that it would take more than simply downsizing to combat the high dropout rate and low achievement. (Cervone, 2006)

At a continuation high school, the recommendations of the student action research team (e.g., replace suspension with peer mediation for minor discipline infractions) were not palatable to school leaders (Kelly, 1993). The gap between student recommendations and adult perspectives can be wide. Principals should prepare themselves to hear recommendations that they might not find palatable and communicate honestly with student researchers about how they will, or will not, act on their recommendations.

Conclusion

Student action research projects have the potential to bring great benefits to students, their schools, and their communities. These projects have the unique capacity to motivate and empower youth to not only view their lives and their futures in different and better ways but to be proactive in changing their lives. Participation in student action research also helps youth develop critical academic and social skills, particularly important for students who have been historically underrepresented in college admission and enrollment. Moreover, student action research gives young people the tools they need to meaningfully participate in civic life by taking action of all kinds in their schools and communities to promote positive change.

Young people stand to gain a great deal from their participation in such projects, as do adults. Student action research projects are exciting and hopeful opportunities for adults in schools to work with young people in new and positive ways. Moreover, principals may find that the research results can help them in their work as school leaders. Data from student action research projects can complement the traditional quantitative student performance data typically available to principals and can reveal aspects of the school experience that are not readily accessible to the adults in the setting.

In addition to adding to the pool of data from which school leaders make decisions, the benefits that student action research offers for the academic, social, and civic development of young people are broad and unique. In a time of intense scrutiny of school performance and accountability, student action research offers a unique opportunity for school leaders to enhance the performance of students through an educational opportunity that allows them to cultivate personal and intellectual interests that address the civic purposes of education.

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