Reclaiming What Education Means to Youth:

Findings from Participatory Action Research for the Jane/Finch Collaborative on Education to Employment

People For Education Conference
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Building Welcoming and Equitable Communities

Hello!

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Roadmap

1. About the Project:
    a. Motivations: Education & Employment Context of Jane/Finch Community
    b. Research Questions
2. Methodologies:
    a. Community-Based Youth Participatory Action Research
    b. Collective Impact Strategy
3. Project Findings
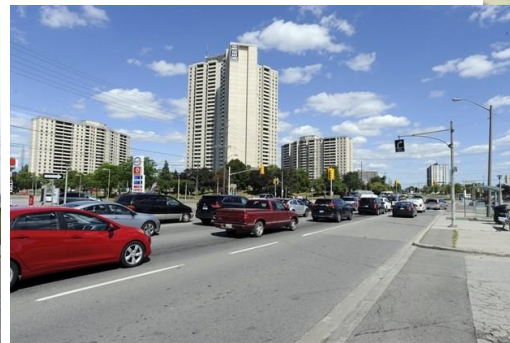4. Facilitated Activity
5. Takeaways

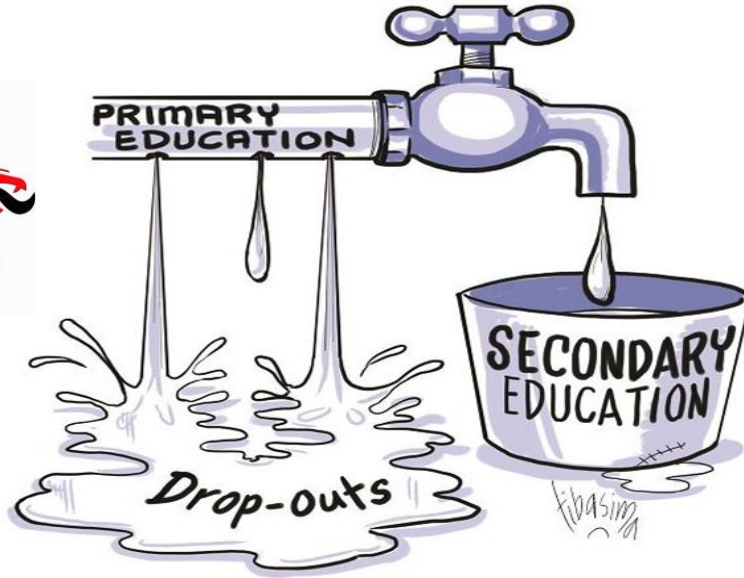Skills for Change
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About the Project: Jane Finch Bridging Education to Employment

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About Jane/Finch

Twitter: @GriffithsH_

Education & Employment in Jane/Finch community

- ## 2014: Lower than average high school graduation rates:
  - **75.9%**; one local high school graduating at **66.8%,** compared to the TDSB average of **84.2%** (TDSB, 2015)
- ## 2017-18: Low literacy rates
  - 3 local secondary schools had some of the lowest literacy rates: (**59% and 55%**), compared to the TDSB average of **81%** (TDSB 2018)
- ## 2016: Less than 12% have Bachelor degrees
  - Only **11.7%** and **11.3%** in Black Creek and Glenfield Jane Heights (JF neighbourhoods) have Bachelor's degree or higher (compared to the City average of **44.1%**)
- ## 2016: Higher than average unemployment rates
  - Unemployment rates above 8.2% City average, at **12.7%** an **11.5%** respectively (City of Toronto, 2016).

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About Jane Finch Bridging Education to Employment Collective Impact project

- Collective Impact project informed by Community-based, Youth Participatory Action Research
- Overall motivation to address insufficient preparation and lack of clear pathways towards secure and decent work, especially for racialized (esp Black) youth in Jane/Finch.

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Research Questions

How would racialized (especially Black) youth in Jane/Finch envision and reimagine, their ideal high school experience?

- What is the perceived purpose, relevance, and value of education?

- What were the key supports (people, programs, lessons, experiences, etc.) which enabled their "success" in education?

- How might current changes in education policy impact the outcomes of racialized youth in the Jane/Finch community?
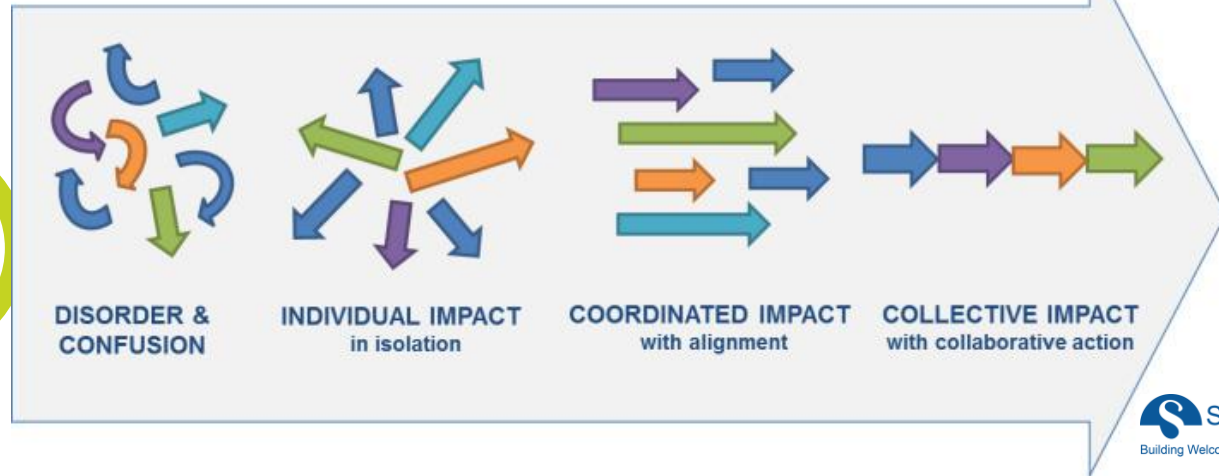
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Methodologies

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Methodologies

Community-Based Youth Participatory Action Research

Collective Impact Approach

DISORDER & CONFUSION

INDIVIDUAL IMPACT
in isolation

COORDINATED IMPACT
with alignment

COLLECTIVE IMPACT
with collaborative action

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Community–Based, Participatory Action Research

Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) is a collaborative approach to research that involves all stakeholders throughout the research process, from **establishing the research question**, to **developing data collection tools**, to **analysis** and **dissemination** of findings.

Community-Based:

Grounded in the needs, issues, con-cerns, strategies of communities and the community- based organizations that serve them.

Participatory:

DIrectly engaging communities and community-knowledge in the research process and its outcomes.

Action-Based:

Supporting and/or enhancing the strategic action that leads to community transformation and social change.

Burns et al. (2011) A Short Guide to Community Based Participatory Action Research

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Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) involves young people constructing knowledge by identifying, researching, and addressing social problems through youth–adult partnerships.

yPAR positions **youth as experts of their life experience**

(Cammarota & Fine, 2010; Checkoway & Richards- Schuster, 2003; Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner, 2013; Shamrova & Cummings, 2017)

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◎ Community-based, Youth Participatory Action research project

  ◉ We co-developed & designed research agenda under a broad umbrella of education & employment.

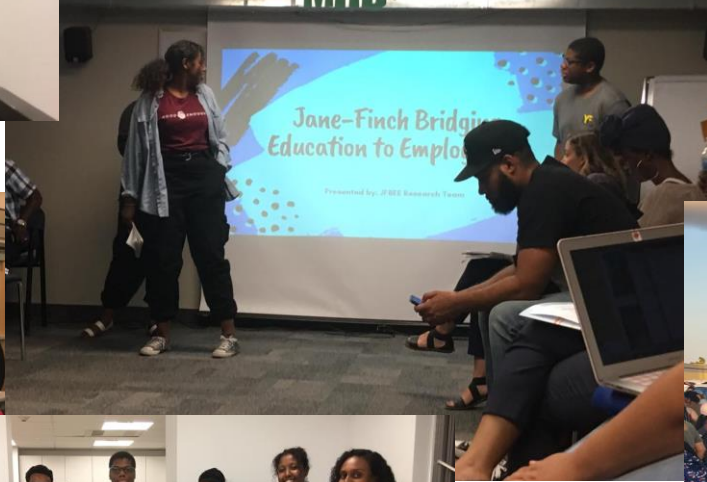◎ Questions informed through research training workshops, community meetings, lived experiences, & team interest

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Community based research vis-à-vis conventional research

There are several differences between CBR and conventional research.

Parameter	Community based research (CBR)	Conventional research
Who are the researchers/ Who conducts the research?	Community members with or without the involvement of a university	The academic community
What is the purpose of the research	Contribute to the betterment of a particular community; social change, social justice	To contribute to the body of knowledge on a given topic
Who is the research intended to serve?	The local community and the academic community	The academic community
Whose knowledge counts?	Both community members and academic experts	Academic experts
Who determines the topics to be researched?	Members of the local community themselves or in collaboration with the academic experts	Funders' interests, academic interests, professional interests and personal interests
What is the rationale for choosing the research methodology?	Community empowerment and mutual learning	Academic conventions; the pursuit of "truth" and "objectivity"
Who has ownership over the research results?	One who designs and controls the research, i.e., community members alone or the former and academic researcher if the research is done in collaboration	The researcher
What aspect of research is emphasized?	Research process	Research outcomes
Mode of presentation	Varies widely and may take multiple and creative forms (for example, video, theatre, written narrative)	Written report
Means of dissemination	Any and all forums where results might have impact: media, public meetings, informal community settings, legislative bodies and others	Presentation at academic conferences, submission in journals

Source: Adapted from Strand et al. (2003, p.9) and University of Delaware (2016).

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We went to the Education Town Hall and asked our politicians about investments in our education

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Source: https://www.everychildcq.org/

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Initial Findings: Youth Focus Groups/Interviews
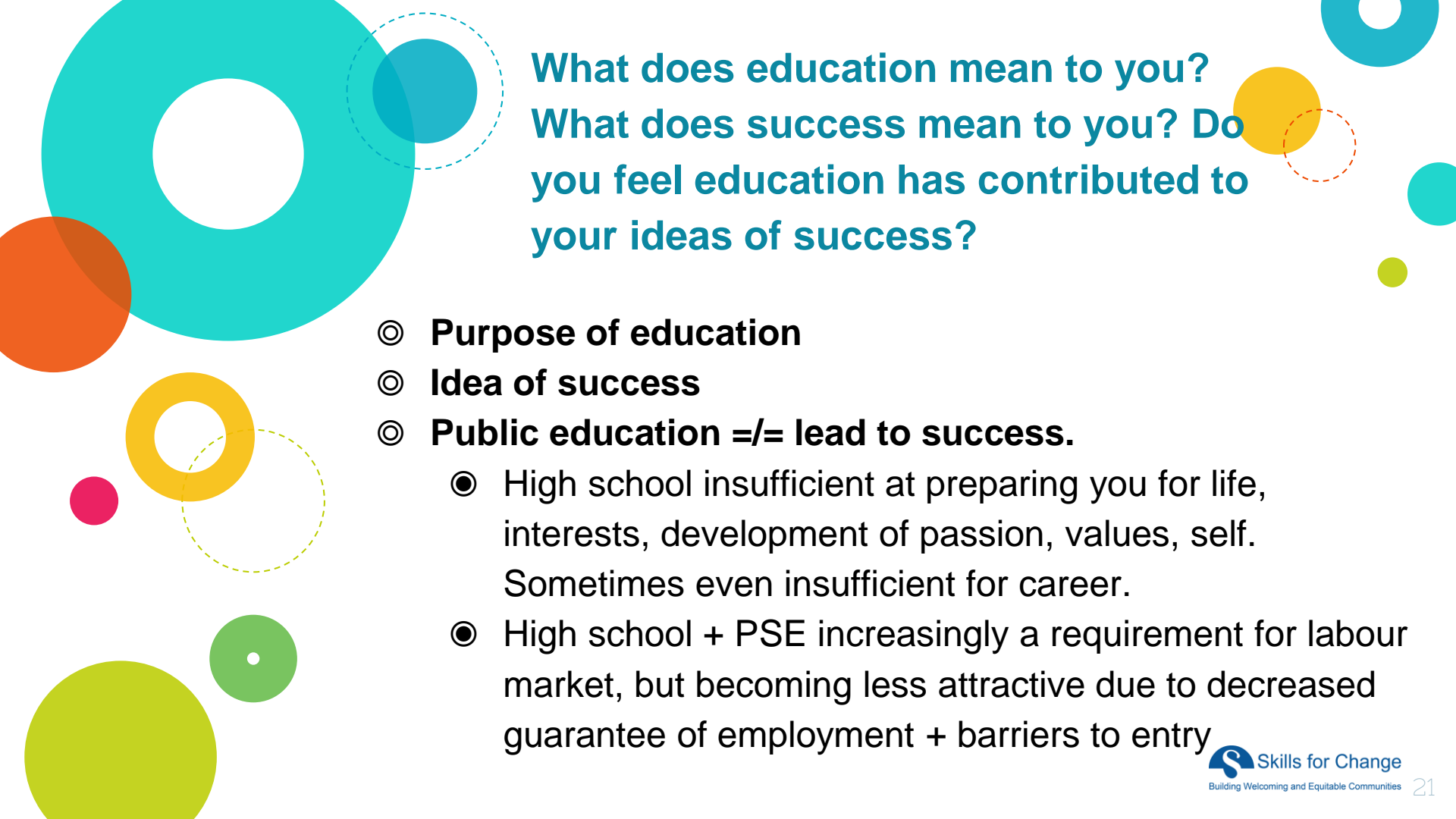
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Interview/Focus Group Participants

Interviews & Focus groups w/ 65 participants
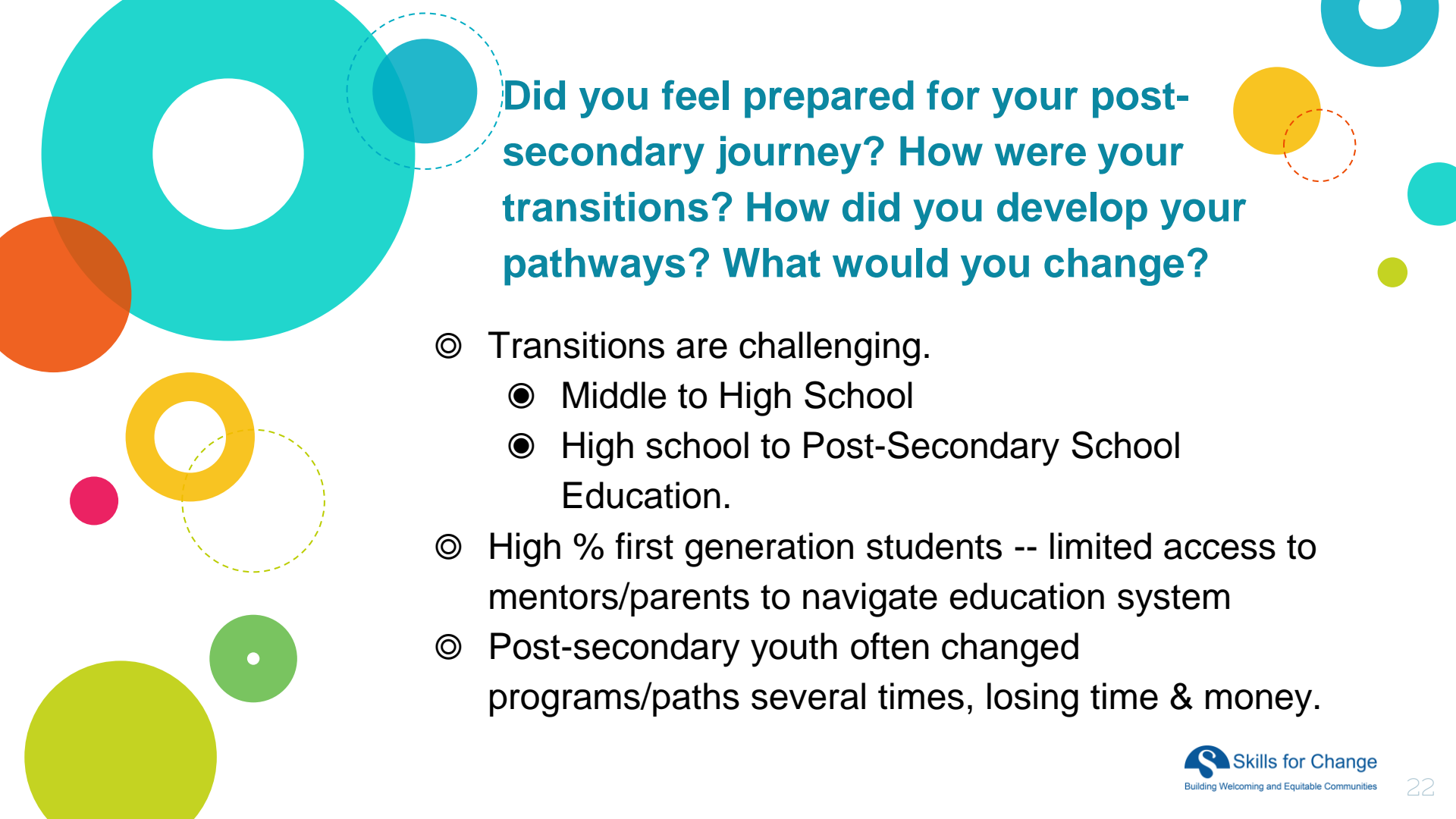
- 30% "Impactful adults/mentors" identified by youth research team
- 70% "Youth" (ages 12-29)

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What does education mean to you? What does success mean to you? Do you feel education has contributed to your ideas of success?
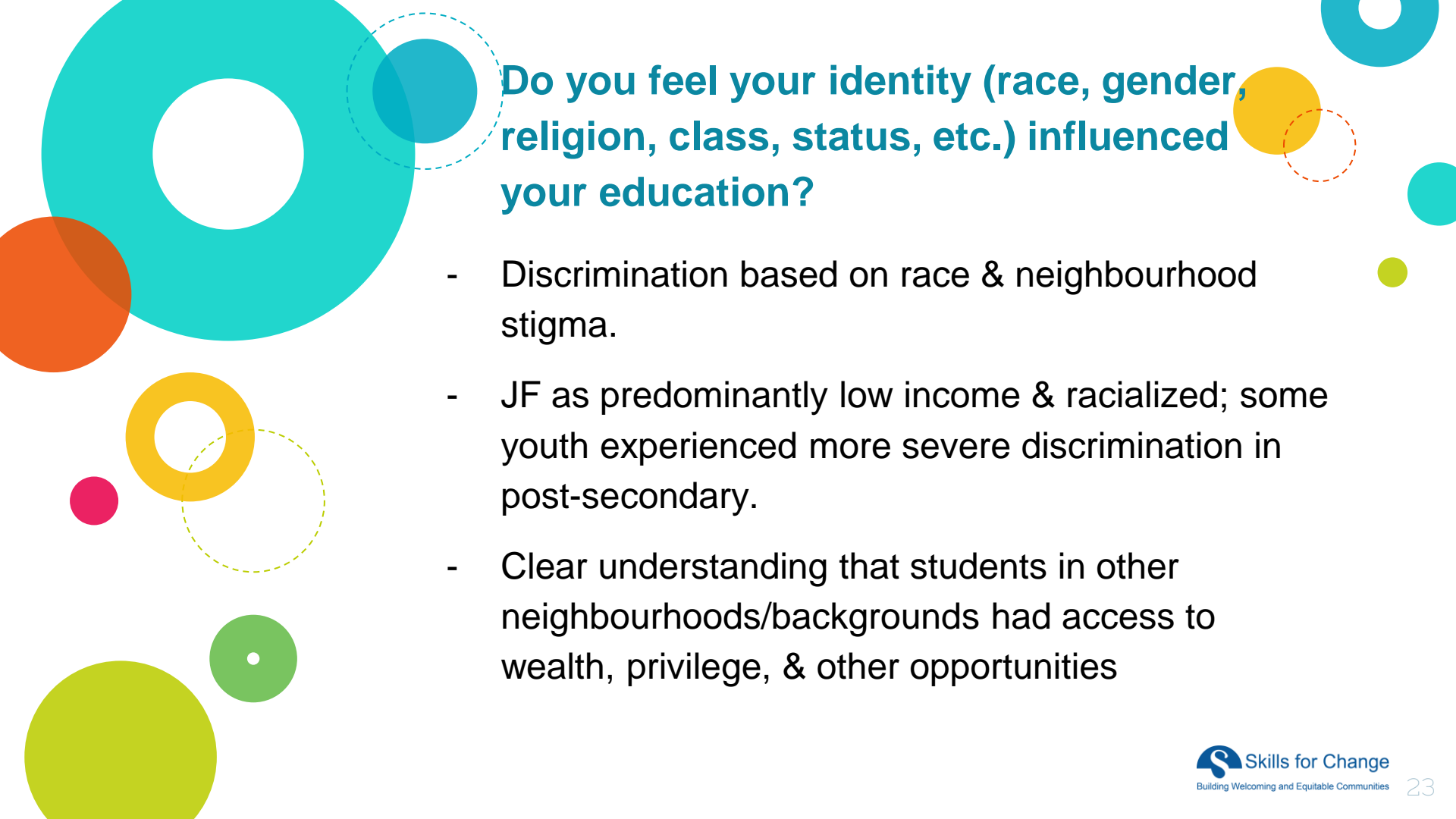
◎ **Purpose of education**
◎ **Idea of success**
◎ **Public education =/= lead to success.**
  ◉ High school insufficient at preparing you for life, interests, development of passion, values, self. Sometimes even insufficient for career.
  ◉ High school + PSE increasingly a requirement for labour market, but becoming less attractive due to decreased guarantee of employment + barriers to entry

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Did you feel prepared for your post-secondary journey? How were your transitions? How did you develop your pathways? What would you change?

◎ Transitions are challenging.
- ◉ Middle to High School
- ◉ High school to Post-Secondary School Education.

◎ High % first generation students -- limited access to mentors/parents to navigate education system

◎ Post-secondary youth often changed programs/paths several times, losing time & money.

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Do you feel your identity (race, gender, religion, class, status, etc.) influenced your education?

- Discrimination based on race & neighbourhood stigma.

- JF as predominantly low income & racialized; some youth experienced more severe discrimination in post-secondary.

- Clear understanding that students in other neighbourhoods/backgrounds had access to wealth, privilege, & other opportunities

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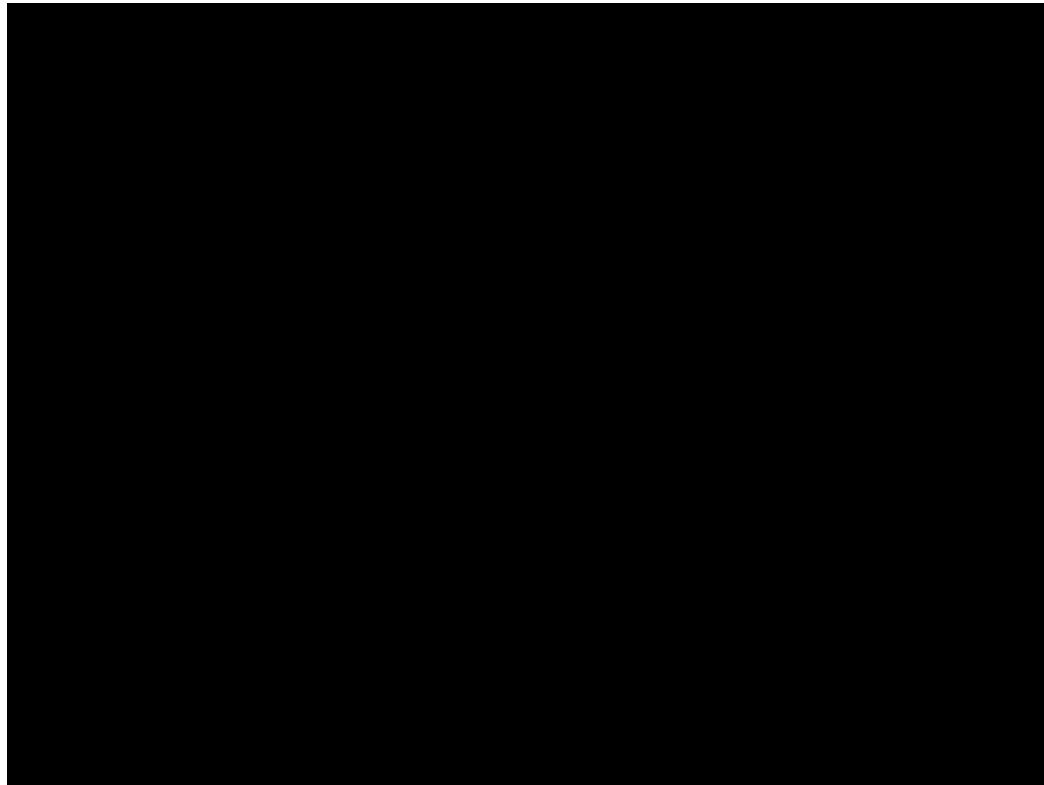Building Welcoming and Equitable Communities

Who motivated you? Were there mentors/teachers/family members that inspired or helped you figure out your educational pathway? How?

- Who were considered mentors?
- Characteristics of good mentors
- Relevance of mentors' race & identity
- Programs which supported pathway

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How will changes in education policy affect your community's ability to access quality education?

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How will changes in education policy affect your ability to access quality education?

Perspectives:
- High school youth
- Post-secondary youth
- Community activists

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How would you reimagine or re-design education for our neighbourhood?

- **Aspirations for curriculum**:
- **Other ways schools can be improved**
  - **be paid to learn** (akin to credit/scholarship/financial incentive),
  - **access to employment in schools**
  - improve **quality/standards checks**, higher expectations
  - create **better reintegration** for youth pushed out
  - invest in programs on mentorship, tutoring, holistic health
  - have **youth teach each other**

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Activity

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Facilitated Brainstorm & Activity

Inspired by **Collective Impact & systems mapping**

- Understand root issues with diverse perspectives
- Map ecosystem of stakeholders
- Develop strategy/project/intervention/new research proposals

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Stakeholder Tables: Brainstorm Challenges

What are the current challenges/issues within public education that you experience in your stakeholder groups?

At your Tables: Brainstorm Challenges

Choose one issue, and nominate one person in each group to stay at the table & explain the issue to next group.

New Tables: Mixed Stakeholder groups

In your mixed groups, make a web/mindmap to unpack the various causes of the problem.

"But why? But why? But why?"

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Stakeholder Mapping

1) On your map, identify relevant stakeholders (on sticky notes).

2) Think of non-traditional stakeholders who might be a resource to the issue.

Intervention Brainstorm

Where are potential gaps?

Where could stakeholders work more collaboratively together?

What could potential interventions be to respond to your issue?

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Shareback

Have one representative of each group share back.

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Takeaways

1. The importance of Community-based, youth Participatory Action Research methodology
2. The importance of having a diversity of knowledge, stakeholders, and pathways
3. Encouraging youth leadership & student voice

We analysed the TDSB survey on Ward 4, and shared our thoughts at the Jane Finch Education Action Group

2017 Student & Parent Census:
Ward 4 Findings

A Presentation to Jane Finch Education Action Group
at Brookview Middle School
February 19, 2019

Prepared by
Maria Yau & Bryce Archer
Research & Development

We analysed the TDSB survey on Ward 4, and shared our thoughts at the Jane Finch Education Action Group

Keep in touch!

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