# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: LEARNING CYCLE 2

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OVERVIEW

In July 2016, nine brave teenagers seized an opportunity to step outside of their learning comfort zones and show themselves and the world what is possible when youth are given ownership over their learning.

GripTape’s second rapid learning cycle dedicated five weeks, from July to September, to follow these nine youth and deepen our understanding of learner agency—the ability to make intentional choices about and take an active role in the course of one’s own learning. We seek approaches for how to develop and promote agency among youth and determine its impact on youth learning and development.

Learning Cycle 2 directly built off the learning from our first cycle which was completed in June 2016 and confirmed overwhelmingly that youth desire ownership over their learning and feel prepared to seize that ownership if given the resources to do so. Learning Cycle 2 focused on:

- Asking the question: Can youth, given encouragement and needed resources, practice agency by leading their own learning experience and meeting their own learning goals?
- Testing our hypothesis that the more youth lead their own learning (practice learner agency), the better they get at it; in other words it sets off a self-reinforcing cycle of learning and development.
- Better understanding the conditions that facilitate the emergence of learner agency captured in our Agency Framework (see Appendix A).

As such, we designed Learning Cycle 2 as a “Learning Challenge” that invited youth, 15-19 years old from underserved communities, to design and execute their own learning. The inaugural cohort of nine GripTape Learning Challengers were given complete decision-making authority over the what, when, where, why, how and with whom of their chosen learning experiences. Youth self-assessed against targets they set, using metrics defined by them. In exchange, we offered them up to $500, weekly encouragement, and recognition for their efforts. A simple but somewhat radical idea that was totally new to every one of our Challengers.

“\[I have never been through failing over and over again and then succeeding. I felt like I didn’t know what I was doing. In school I can always figure it out because someone gives it to you. But with this journey I had no idea, and I wasn’t being taught. I had to teach myself by looking at resources. Teachers are spoonfeeding you information and you have to remember and spit it out, but this was deep learning because you had to use the knowledge on something; actually do something.\]

—Youth Challenger

1 GripTape Learning Cycle 1: Summary of Findings, June 2016
The following summary provides a deeper analysis of our key findings. Perhaps most critically, this summary introduces you to our nine Challengers and why owning their learning was so powerful for them. We tell you their stories here, but we invite you to hear from them directly at www.GripTape.org.

GripTape’s mission is to ignite a national movement to put youth in the driver’s seat of their own learning. We hope the data and case studies in this summary will help you nurture the same unbending belief in the potential of youth.

FINDINGS AT-A-GLANCE

Below is a summary of findings from Learning Cycle 2 that surprise and propel us in our work. Data shows that when these nine youth were given full decision-making authority over their learning:

1. 100% chose topics that really interested them and they felt passionate about
2. 100% were motivated by a desire to demonstrate to themselves and others what they could accomplish on their own
3. 100% accomplished the learning goals they set out to meet
4. 100% valued the learning they achieved for their future success, citing growth of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal competencies
5. 8 out of 9 saw improvement in their self-confidence and in their mindset around growth and learning
6. Overall, they demonstrated a positive change in their goal-setting and self-regulation skills; key skills to practicing agency and seizing learning
7. 75% cited money as a strong motivator to apply, but 100% credited the presence of a person who cared about and encouraged them as key to their persistence
8. 75% saw the Challenge as a pathway to learning a topic they had no other opportunity to explore
9. 100% said the Challenge was the first time they truly drove their own learning
10. 100% wanted more such opportunities and would recommend the Challenge to their friends

In short, when youth have full ownership over their learning they are motivated to learn things that are interesting to them and will impact their future; they persist even when faced with challenges or setbacks; they gain important knowledge about both their topic of choice and how they learn; they acquire interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that can positively impact their future learning success; and they have fun doing it! But to be successful at driving their own learning, they need full decision-making authority, a small amount of money, and a personal champion. This is our roadmap.
DEMOGRAPHICS

The initial cohort of nine youth was kept intentionally small to enable a deep and comprehensive case study of each youth participant. Despite the small number, however, the cohort is deliberately diverse so as to reflect the larger population we hope to engage in future efforts. Youth came from four different races / ethnicities, were 15-18 years old, with a significant proportion of older participants, and were nearly equal numbers of males and females.

Additionally, the nine Challengers achieved above average academic performance in school, with all nine self-reporting their GPA as 3.0 or above. This selection bias was taken into account in our data analysis and in developing selection criteria for our next Challenge.

LEARNING CHALLENGE IMPLEMENTATION

The Learning Challenge was designed as a call to action to youth, 15-19 years old, to authentically lead their own learning. In July 2016, in partnership with three organizations, The Future Project, TeenSHARP and Wilmington Children’s Chorus, GripTape reached out to over 250 youth to invite them to apply for grants of up to $500 to lead a learning journey they fully designed, produced and implemented.
Of the 45 youth who ultimately attended four in-person information sessions across three states, 22 youth took the leap and applied to be a Challenger (11 from The Future Project, 7 from TeenSHARP, and 4 from Wilmington Children’s Chorus). These brave youth moved through an application process intentionally designed to prioritize equity: Applicants registered online via a simple Google Form and then were invited to come for an in-person interview, or “pitch,” hosted by our partners on a Saturday. In their pitches, applicants presented their learning journey visions in any format of their choosing, from power points, to songs, to written statements, after which they engaged in a short discussion with GripTape staff. Applicants received 10 questions to guide their pitches.

GripTape used a standard judging rubric to select nine youth. These Challengers, and their parents, signed a formal agreement outlining their vision, goals, objectives and plans for their journeys, and what success would look like in their own words (see Learning Journeys section below). This agreement functioned as a form of contract and guide throughout their journeys.

During their journeys, Challengers were asked to participate in weekly check-in calls with their designated GripTape point of contact. While these check-ins were primarily in service of data collection (see Co-Learning section below), they also served to provide direct and active encouragement to Challengers. It is critical to note that GripTape points of contact were purposeful in avoiding direct help or guidance, instead playing more of a “granny” role instead of serving as a mentor, guide or coach. This was crucial to ensuring the youth genuinely led their own learning journeys without undue influence.

At the end of their journeys, Challengers received a formal certificate of completion, letter of recommendation, and feature on the GripTape website (www.GripTape.org).

The only requirements were that:

a. youth choose topics they felt passionate about and they believed directly related to their success, either now or in the future

b. the journey be out of school, and not dedicate more than 1/3 of time to adult-engineered experiences (e.g. courses, textbooks, clubs, etc.)

c. the journey be completed within 5 weeks, before school started in September

d. applicants have an affiliation with our partner organizations so we could leverage their support for this initial implementation

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2 The School in the Cloud, the Granny Cloud: https://www.theschoolinthecloud.org/
CO-LEARNING: DATA & RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

GripTape’s data and research methodology were directly embedded into the Challenge implementation as a co-learning experience. From the outset, GripTape emphasized that a main goal of the Challenge was co-learning with youth to deepen our understanding of learner agency; a goal that would require effort and partnership by youth Challengers during their journeys and beyond.

Learning Cycle 2 leveraged both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools to support our learning. Below is an overview of the activities and tools used, including response rates when it was fewer than all nine youth.

Data Collection Activities & Tools:
- Online registration
- Application judging rubric
- Pre-journey intake survey (7 out of 9)
- Virtual orientation
- Weekly (5) calls with GripTape staff, with data captured via a Learning Log
- Post-journey exit survey (8 out of 9)
- End-of-journey in-person interviews
- Testimonial videos
- Interviews with youth who attended information sessions, but did not apply

Data Analysis & Review Effort:
- Analysis of survey data, including a comparison of pre- and post-survey data on Challenger skills and behaviors
- Coding and synthesis of data captured in the Learning Logs and End-of-journey in-person interviews around emerging themes and learning questions
- Aggregation of all data per Challenger to create mini-case studies, summarized in a set of Challenger Profiles and Challenger Story Slides
- Identification of key themes across the nine cases and important outliers

OUTCOMES: CHALLENGERS’ SUCCESS

Our findings from the first-ever GripTape Learning Challenge are an initial indication that when youth are given decision-making power and the resources needed to own their learning, they are successful in achieving their goals, and that it triggers a self-reinforcing cycle of learning and development towards young adult success.

First, when given the opportunity to select the topic and means of learning, 100% of participating youth chose topics about which they feel passionate, and in which they see value for their current and future success. In fact, all youth saw the Learning Challenge as an opportunity to explore a topic they believed they had no other pathway to explore, and all youth reported the Challenge was the first time they truly had the chance to drive their own learning. One Challenger noted, “I love the fact that students are able to choose whatever they want to learn and accomplish it themselves,” while another said the fact that it is an opportunity “for teenagers to pursue dreams and passions without needing to go through a bunch of educational courses” was what appealed most to him.
When asked why they thought it would be a valuable experience and what they hoped to learn, Challengers cited how the experience could jumpstart their college and career success, as well as help them gain knowledge about their topic of interest and practical skills like communication and time management. Youth noted they thought the Learning Challenge would help them “find out things about myself,” such as how they work under pressure, while also exploring their creativity. One Challenger summarized why she was motivated to apply by saying, “I think it will be a fun experience to bolster my future.”

Overall, participants saw great success over the course of their learning journeys with 100% accomplishing the learning goals they set out to meet. This is even more remarkable given that one-third of youth reported it was hard to stay motivated through the entire learning journey, two-thirds reported there were points when they felt unsure about their ability to complete their journey, and all youth indicated having no pre-existing knowledge of their journey topics.

Interestingly, 8 of the 9 Challengers modified their original goals over the course of the five weeks, with 3 setting new goals that exceeded their original, and 5 intentionally redefining their goals, as a direct result of progress and learning achieved during their journeys. For example, one Challenger chose to do a final presentation rather than a research report as originally planned because she shifted her research methodology to a case study and felt a presentation was a better-suited and more engaging output. Another Challenger felt she had gathered all the necessary data with fewer site visits, therefore deciding to shift her activities and apply her efforts in other areas of greater need. Youth exceeding their initial goals took advantage of their momentum and early success to reach unanticipated outcomes.

Overall, Challengers saw their goals as more flexible than fixed, meant to be revisited based on continuous learning, course correction when needed, and ongoing self-regulation and self-reflection. By the end of the Challenge, all participants described having a sense of accomplishment and pride at having successfully met their goals by directing their own learning.

Challengers reported experiencing a new way of learning and described multiple ways that participating in the Challenge changed the way they will approach learning in the future. All nine Challengers said their journey involved a different way of learning that was totally new to them. 100% stated that this was the first time in their lives they were truly able to own their learning from start to finish. They also all indicated that learning on their own was challenging at times, and required them to be creative and proactive to succeed; something they ultimately felt further expanded their learning broadly. For instance, Challengers demonstrated resourcefulness by seeking help through online forums for troubleshooting programming or to gain expertise, or tried new techniques of networking to achieve access to experts in their topic area. Ultimately, the majority of Challengers reported this new way of learning would change how they approach learning in the future. Specifically, a broader understanding of where and how they can learn was reported, with youth citing a new understanding that learning does not have to take place in school or with an adult. One Challenger noted, “This Challenge taught me that learning isn’t a thing that requires an adult.” Another youth said, “Yes, [it has changed my approach to learning] because I now know how I learn better. In school, I’m not able to experiment with how I learn and having this opportunity helped me a lot to succeed.”
Youth reported being motivated to persevere and continue their journey by several factors, including the desire to demonstrate to themselves (100%) and others (88%) what they can accomplish on their own and to pursue something that is important to their future (100%). Youth also credited having someone who cared about and encouraged them throughout the course of the journey as key to their persistence. As one participant reported, “I kept telling myself I made a promise to others and myself, and I needed to just keep going.”

Beyond reaching their learning goals, participants also reported gaining important skills they believe will directly impact their success now and in the future. 100% of participants reported a gain in meaningful knowledge or skills over the course of the journey. Youth cited not only content mastery but also the acquisition of cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies. Challengers reported gaining greater self-confidence, better time management, greater persistence, improved communication, an ability to budget, increased leadership, and new or improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

8 out of 9 Challengers saw improvement in their self-confidence and in their mindset around learning. Participants on average also saw positive changes in goal-setting and self-regulation behaviors, skills believed to be critical to successfully practice agency and pursue learning opportunities. One Challenger noted that “the Challenge changed the way I saw myself. I have been told that I am a problem solver for others, but I never knew that I could be a problem solver for myself.” Another Challenger said that before the Challenge her procrastination and poor time management were issues, but she found a way to be organized in this Challenge that enabled her to accomplish the goals she set out for herself, and that would be useful to her in the future.

Uniformly, Challengers believe their new skills are transferable. Youth mentioned that many of the skills developed through participation in the Challenge had value to other aspects of their lives. For instance, one Challenger said her newfound self-confidence would help her perform music and be less self-conscious and anxious. Another Challenger said his communication skills would help him network and create a community of musicians. And yet another noted that this Learning Challenge would serve to jumpstart her future career and now she feels she has the skills and confidence to open a fashion design business.

Challengers also explained how they expect their experiences and new skills will translate to new behaviors in their future learning activities. For example, they cited improved understanding of the importance of forethought and good planning in their work, as well as self-regulatory and reflective skills like time management and asking questions before, during, and after a learning experience. Participants noted that truly having experienced learning on their own will inspire them to drive themselves in school, and think innovatively in solving problems. Perhaps most importantly, Challengers stated their experience helped them see what they were capable of.

All Challengers maintained ownership over their learning journeys from beginning to end. Challengers served as the main architects of their journeys, independently inventing, designing and implementing their learning over the full five weeks. Although several Challengers looked to peers and adults for support, they noted that they consciously maintained their own vision throughout. Interestingly, while nearly all
Challengers shared their experiences during the journey with adults, and many asked for help with things like transportation and materials, none felt they had been influenced or guided by them. One Challenger remarked, “I really felt like I was in charge of my own learning, which is not something that I get to do in school.” Echoing this feeling, another Challenger said “Leading this journey means to me that people can achieve anything they set their mind to.”

Finally, youth overwhelmingly appreciated the Learning Challenge experience and seek additional, similar opportunities for themselves and other youth. Each of the nine participants reported they enjoyed participating, want more opportunities to lead their own learning, and would recommend the Learning Challenge to their friends. Further demonstrating this point, all nine Challengers took part in recruitment efforts for the subsequent Learning Challenge which launched in September 2016, and 7 of the 9 elected to support future Challengers. In addition, all surveyed Challengers indicated they would continue to pursue their learning even after the Challenge ended.

**FACTORS DRIVING SUCCESS**

Data analysis highlights seven key factors that likely played a significant role in driving Challengers’ success:

1. **Passion for the topic**
2. **Belief in their own ability to be successful**
3. **Desire to demonstrate what they are capable of to themselves**
4. **Receiving encouragement**
5. **Access to financial support**
6. **Persistence**
7. **Strong learner skills: Forethought, goal-setting, self-regulation & self-reflection**

**Passion for the topic:** All survey respondents said the desire to pursue something important to their future and that they cared about were key to motivating them to initiate and complete their journeys.

**Increased belief in their ability to be successful:** 8 out of 9 Challengers noted an increase in their self-confidence as a result of the Challenge, and said this increased self-belief contributed substantively to their success. For example, one Challenger stated that the experience helped her to find her voice, which enabled her to self-advocate during the Challenge and approach and engage with fashion designers, a critical part of her journey. Another Challenger spoke of not knowing that she could lead her learning until this experience, and feeling fear of her ability to succeed without direct adult guidance or supervision. The simple act of being able to practice learner agency empowered youth with a critical consciousness of what they are capable of, which directly increased their belief in their own abilities.

**Receiving Encouragement:** 100% of Challengers reported that the encouragement they received from their GripTape point of contact during weekly phone check-ins was critical to their success. They felt it not only helped them through times of doubt or challenge, but they also credited it with helping them to
stay on track. This is particularly important given that 5 out of 9 Challengers mentioned struggling with time management during their journey, and two-thirds said there were points when they felt unsure about whether they would complete the Challenge.

Most Challengers also reported sharing their experiences during their journey with adults or other youth similar in age as noted in Outcomes above. Interestingly, however, Challengers were somewhat more likely to ask for information or help planning from other youth (see Peer Support below).

**Peer Support:** Despite not providing formal peer support, 5 out of 9 Challengers formed peer support groups or sought peer encouragement in their journeys. 80% said they often or sometimes asked a peer for information related to their topic or learning, and 40% said the same about assistance with planning. As a Challenger stated, “Peers helped to support me when I got stuck and really encouraged me.”

**Persistence:** Throughout their journey, Challengers often noted that persistence was key in getting to their goals or their next milestone. For example, one Challenger noted that he needed to keep taking one step at a time to get the next line of code, and another required multiple iterations to achieve successful music recordings. One Challenger did not finish at the end of the original five weeks, but continued to persist and finished his journey a few weeks later. Survey data also showed Challengers believed in the power of persistence, with 100% reporting on their post-experience surveys that they believe they will eventually succeed if they persist.

**Pre-existence of Critical Learner Skills:** Research indicates that youth with strong learner skills, defined here and in GripTape’s Agency Framework (Appendix A) as forethought, goal-setting, self-regulation and self-reflection, have a greater potential to successfully seize and actualize their own learning. The data collected and analyzed herewith provide some indication that this hypothesis may indeed have merit.

As a cohort, the Challengers on average had relatively high (self-reported and observed) levels of these learner skills prior to the beginning of their journeys, and showed a positive change, especially in goal-setting and self-regulation after completing the Challenge. This is early evidence of the self-reinforcing cycle of learning and development triggered by increased learner agency: youth likely need these skills to be successful, and they likely gain more experience in these behaviors as a result of participating.

While we are not yet clear from the first Learning Challenge how these four related skills interact, or if a hierarchy of skills exists, self-regulation and goal-setting were particularly prominent in these nine journeys. All Challengers showed extremely strong self-regulation, with 7 out of 9 dramatically course correcting over the course of their journey based on real-time experience and data. Additionally, while setting high-level goals was required by the guidelines of the Challenge, all 9 continued to revisit and reassess these goals during their journey, including setting interim and short-term goals to help them succeed.

Similarly, it is unclear what pre-existing levels of these skills are necessary for youth to successfully practice learner agency given that all nine possessed these skills to some extent prior to beginning their journey. We plan to further explore this in the next Learning Challenge.

3 GripTape Research Overview
THE LEARNING CHALLENGERS & THEIR JOURNEYS

True to the youth-led and designed nature of the Challenge, each journey is totally unique, ranging widely in topic and implementation, and how success is measured. Below is an overview of each of the nine Journeys, as described by the Challengers in their own words.

ASHLEY
New York, NY  17

“The Learning Challenge gave me more confidence to go after my interests. It really helped me realize that this is what I want to do in my career.”

**Topic:** Fashion Business Principles  
**Title:** $300 and a Dream of a Fashion Business  
**Learning vision:** To explore how to kick start a fashion design business

**Success looked like:**
- Creating clothing prototypes
- Learning the foundations of a fashion business
- Networking in the fashion business

**Accomplished by:**
- Interviewing and networking with business owners in the fashion industry
- Reading autobiographies of fashion business owners
- Attending fashion industry events
- Creating a design fashion line and all branding for it

ASHLEY
New York, NY  17

“I learned about partnership and the importance of working with somebody. I learned how to step out of my comfort zone. Not only in regards to music but in the way I do business. I learned how to adapt to situations and to set a plan, but when a problem comes up, to find a solution and go full force with a new plan as I need to get it done.”

**Topic:** Music Recording and Social Networks  
**Title:** 302 P.E.R.C [Private Eye Recording Community]  
**Learning vision:** Creating a sustainable community of Delaware musicians to get Delaware on the map as a place with good musicians

**Success looked like:**
- 1 final song produced and sold
- Getting 7 members signed up
- Launching a website
- Collaborating to make music

**Accomplished by:**
- Recording music and sharing it
- Forming a community of musicians
- Branding and advertising the organization
- Interviewing IP lawyers about copyright laws

GRIP Tape LEARNING CYCLE 2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
**BRANDON**
Philadelphia, PA 16

“Learning how to change your plan while you are in it is not something your school teaches you because you can’t change what they want you to learn and they want everyone to be learning the same thing all the time. You have to learn it by doing it yourself.”

**Topic:** Education  
**Title:** A Study of Education  
**Learning vision:** To provide myself a head start as an educator by getting information on what is needed to become what a student needs

**Success looked like:**
- A full-fledged guide on how teaching should and shouldn’t be carried out

**Accomplished by:**
- Reading about best teaching practices
- Interviewing teachers and students
- Amassing a guide on teaching practices

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**CYNTICHE**
New Castle, DE 15

“I like the challenge because I have the chance to challenge myself and try something new.”

**Topic:** Art and Drawing  
**Title:** The Art of Drawing  
**Learning vision:** To learn how to express myself better through art and drawing and raise an awareness of bullying through art pieces

**Success looked like:**
- Visiting art museums
- Following courses and tutorials in illustration
- Creating 10+ drawings and paintings using different mediums
- Advocating for an end to bullying through art pieces

**Accomplished by:**
- Online instructional videos
- Visits to art museums
- Painting and drawing in sketchbooks
- A culminating project that displays art pieces with a theme to advocate against bullying
**JULIA**
Wilmington, DE 17

“I wanted to learn about this topic of mixing music for such a long time and the learning challenge gave me the space and resources I needed. It was such a great experience.”

**Topic:** Music Production  
**Title:** Mixing and Mastering Music: A Tuneful Track  
**Learning vision:** To get the experience of recording and mixing music and uploading the music online to get others to appreciate music

**Success looked like:**
- Having 2 recordings finished and mixed
- Understanding how to mix music
- Uploading the music online for listeners to enjoy

**Accomplished by:**
- Recording vocals and instrumentals
- Overlaying music
- Mixing the music with mixing equipment
- Sharing music on Sound Cloud

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**ETHAN**
Wilmington, DE 16

“In the past, I was almost embarrassed to talk about my ideas with my friends. They didn’t really seem all that doable. But after I actually accomplished it, I have now talked to friends and teachers about it. It went from ‘another great idea’ – maybe ‘a crazy idea’ – to something that is actually accomplished and done.”

**Topic:** Engineering and Coding  
**Title:** Build it Cheaper  
**Learning vision:** To understand Python programming and electrical circuit design

**Success looked like:**
- Create a prototype of a lighting board for theater that is cheaper than those currently used
- Go through a demo of the prototype
- Type a command into the interface and the lights act accordingly
- Get the prototype working with code in sync with hardware

**Accomplished by:**
- Coding and computer programming to be able to control the lights
- Creating an electrical circuit design
- Creating final prototypes of the product that could be used in theatres
“The learning was the most successful thing... over the top. I learned more in 4 weeks than I can learn in a whole school year. In school they are not going to teach you how to greet adults, talk to an audience, how to create a budget plan...tax forms. Things I need to know for the real world. I now feel like a young adult back in school, and this is definitely the reason why. And, my parents treat me differently now. They are much more trustful and asking me to do more and be responsible for more.”

**Topic:** Music Production  
**Topic:** Fashion Advertising  
**Title:** Juiced: The Summer Collection  
**Learning vision:** To brand and create an image for the Juiced clothing line

**Success looked like:**
- Understanding more about what sells
- Conducting a photoshoot for the company
- Networking to expand the business
- Understanding how to manage money and finances

**Accomplished by:**
- Coordinating a photoshoot and all logistics such as a venue, a makeup artist, models, promotional materials, a budget and all other logistics

“I was so used to asking for permission and going to an adult for approval, so it took me a while to realize that what I needed was my own approval, and once I had that, to judge myself based on whether I thought it was good enough.”

**Topic:** The Brain  
**Title:** The Seed in the Brain  
**Learning vision:** To learn how to incorporate creativity in a scientific way and have a full concept of what the brain can do

**Success looked like:**
- A written research report
- Data about the brain gathered from watching kids learn about science
- Being able to communicate about the brain to another person
- Making graphs that aggregate the data gathered

**Accomplished by:**
- Researching the brain and creativity
- Creating a scientific experiment with kids that involve painting and delving into the workings of the brain even more
- Amassing a presentation of findings
IMPLEMENTATION LESSONS LEARNED

As the first implementation of GripTape’s Learning Challenge there was much to be learned about this model for facilitating learner agency. As such we prioritized capturing lessons learned about implementation that will direct impact future implementations, including:

- Youth felt the application timeline was too short, and asked for more time to think about their journeys and to restructure their schedules to create the time to lead a journey.

- Requiring in-person attendance of youth for information sessions and pitching, i.e. not providing a fully virtual application model, may have prevented some youth from applying due to lack of transportation, resources or work schedules.

- That being said, holding the interviews in-person was important to personalize the experience and make it less daunting.

- The open-ended parameters of the Challenge, (i.e. not dictating topics, plans or goals), coupled with a lack of examples to see and reflect on, confused some youth.

- When parents were not engaged in orientation calls, getting parental signatures proved challenging, and in some cases dramatically delayed getting youth their grants.

- Asking youth to outline their vision, goals, plans, and what success looks like at the outset provided a valuable structure to the journeys.

- Collecting W9 forms and signatures to ensure payment was quite onerous and could feel overwhelming, especially to youth who had little access to their parents.

- Only paying youth with paper checks, instead of offering a variety of options, including cash, gift cards, or money orders, proved particularly challenging as few youth had bank accounts.

- The check-in calls with GripTape staff were highly valuable for connecting with and encouraging youth, and proved the most valuable form of data collection.
While we requested all Challengers to document their journeys, only one Challenger submitted full documentation of his journey, including progress and product, with most Challengers instead focusing exclusively on product.

Of the recognitions and rewards offered, 75% of youth cited money as a strong motivator for applying, but the letters of recommendation for college and career were cited as the most important for persistence.

THE NEXT GRIPTAPE LEARNING CHALLENGE

As this report goes to press, Learning Cycle 3 in the form of our next GripTape Learning Challenge is already underway with 24 youth embarking on 18 learning journeys. Learning Cycle 3 directly builds on the findings outlined in this summary with the explicit goals of:

- Delving further into the learner skills that are critical for youth driving their own learning, including their interactions
- Continuing to test the validity of our various subcomponents
- Determining if our findings from Learning Cycle 2 hold true when we more than double in size

This second Challenge will seek to further deepen our knowledge base by determining what impact, if any, the following has on a youth’s ability to drive their own learning:

- Lower academic performance, as defined by GPA
- Working in teams versus individually
- Having direct and formal peer support
- Reducing the amount of adult support and encouragement
- Extending the time available to complete a journey to up to 3 months
- Shifting recruitment to an all-virtual model to support scale and ensure equity

Learning Cycle 3 will be completed at the end of February, when the last of the Challengers finish their journeys. This will result in an additional set of findings that will inform our practice and another rapid iterative learning cycle.

True to our goal to always be learning, we are already starting to plan for our fourth cycle for the spring of 2017. Learning Cycle 4 will shift the focus towards investigating a scaled model of the Challenge, as well as how youth can take greater ownership over the Challenge, both their individual success and that of their peers, what we are calling youth activation. Towards this end, on November 30th the GripTape Youth Leadership Board, in collaboration with a subset of Challengers, formally assumed responsibility for awareness building and recruiting for future Challenges with the support of the GripTape team. We are planting the seeds for a truly youth-to-youth powered movement and are excited to see what is to come.
APPENDIX A: EXCERPT FROM GRIPTAPE’S FRAMEWORK FOR THE CONDITIONS TO FACILITATE THE EMERGENCE OF AGENCY

A core component of GripTape’s work is building a research-based framework, informed by our rapid learning cycles to guide us all towards defining and identifying the conditions required to facilitate the emergence of learner agency among youth 15-19 years of age. We seek to use this as the foundation for the tools practitioners and young people need to put youth in the driver’s seat of their own learning.

Following is a brief excerpt of that Framework.

THE FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS

We propose a framework comprised of four nested and interrelated components. These components move from the internal locus and skills, which lie at the core, to the contextual aspects of the learner experience and environment. The framework targets all youth 15 to 19 years of age with full cognitive capacity.

**Internal:** The first two components are internal, representing the learner’s own beliefs and actual and perceived capacity to exercise control over their own learning, and are driven by their own interests.

- **Learner Internal Locus** is an individual learner’s belief in their ability to exercise control over their learning and their desire to do so. It is important to note that these beliefs can be learned and developed. In many ways, this is the most critical of our four components, directly impacting how all other influences are enacted and perceived. Time and time again, research has shown that youth who believe in their self-efficacy out-perform and out-persist even their more competent peers (Morton & Montgomery, 2011; Dweck, 2006).

- **Learner Skills** are what a learner must practice and gain competence in to effectively contribute to, influence and guide their learning. While the internal locus can propel a learner on the path, completing that learning journey requires a set of core intrapersonal and meta-cognitive competencies, all of which can be learned through practice, as well as a deeper understanding of one’s own learning styles and preferences.
Contextual: The second set of components are the external contexts and influences that can have a profound effect on a young person’s ability, desire, and willingness to take ownership over their process of learning. While external, it is important to note that youth play an active role in shaping these contexts.

**Learner Experience** itself must be constructed via developmentally-appropriate experiences that are perceived as valuable by the learner so as to help foster the skills of agency, nurture the development of mindsets and either discover, unearth, or amplify curiosities, interests and passions. Ideally, the experience should not be bound by pre-determined time, modality or location constraints.

**Learner Environment** is the external context surrounding the learner, including connectedness to adults and near-peers for purposes of supportive relationships, external validation, the influence of peers, and the tangible resources needed for a young person to seize opportunities for learning. This component also emphasizes interpersonal skills and the critical importance of working together to achieve individual and collective agency.

**15 SUB-COMPONENTS**

The four components outlined above are made up of 15 sub-components that we posit can most effectively create the necessary conditions to facilitate the emergence of agency.

As with the above components, these sub-components are seen as interrelated and move from the internal (purple and green) to the external (orange and blue), spanning cognitive, intrapersonal, interpersonal and meta-cognitive skills.
Below we offer brief definitions of the 15 sub-components included in our framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learner Internal Locus</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindsets</td>
<td>Belief in one’s ability and competence, coupled with the conviction that we can all get better and grow; mindsets can be learned and developed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>Strong interest in a topic that is displayed over a sustained period of time and can progress from interest or curiosity to passion.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learner Skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Forethought</td>
<td>Ability to set and inform an intention that will guide action plans and strategies for realizing them (vision).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal-Setting</td>
<td>Ability to set goals and anticipate likely outcomes (plan).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Regulation</td>
<td>Ability to construct and follow through on an appropriate course of action, and course correct as needed, including emotional intelligence (implement).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
<td>Ability to reflect on one’s thoughts, actions and experiences and learn from them (evaluate).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learner Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit of Competence</td>
<td>Opportunities to learn through appropriately rigorous experiences that lead to greater levels of competence and confidence (mindsets).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Opportunities to exercise autonomous decision-making over the learning process, experience and outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Learning is interactive and reciprocal with all involved, youth and adults, learning from each other, sharing ideas, and co-constructing the learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purposeful</td>
<td>Learning experience is interpreted and perceived of by the learner as relevant and meaningful.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learner Environment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>External recognition and acknowledgement of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Adult Partnerships</td>
<td>Presence of adults as role models and champions, engaging in equitable, respectful, trusting, and reciprocal relationships, and who believe they themselves have agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near Peers</td>
<td>Presence of near peers (youth 2-3 years older) as mentors, champions and role models who can inspire, support, and help learning to feel relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Connection to peers who contribute, share and give feedback in inclusive social experiences that are fluid, engaging, and support a youth’s learning intentions and goals, and help to foster collective agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Access to the resources (information, tools, space, transportation, time, money, etc.) needed to carry out the learning meaningfully.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>