



**TouchStone Leaders Platform
MVYLI BETA Report
June 2016**

Overview

The Martha's Vineyard Leadership Initiative was selected as a BETA site for The Stone Soup Leadership Institute's Global Leaders Platform. The Institute is a 501c3 non-profit organization founded on Martha's Vineyard in 1997 -- developing educational tools, creating youth-community leadership initiatives, sustainability projects inspired by the book, ***Stone Soup for the World: Life Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes***.

The Institute's book and curriculum has been used in over 120 communities worldwide to inspire youth and engage leaders to address critical issues facing their communities. From Martha's Vineyard to the inner cities of Baltimore, Cincinnati, and Oakland to rural communities of Puerto Rico, Caribbean Island of Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands and the Philippines, The Institute has developed strategic partnerships to bring underserved communities into the new global economy. The Institute developed 6 unique youth leadership initiatives on Martha's Vineyard (MVYLI), Hawaii, Oahu, Lanai (SHYLI), Vieques (VYLI) and Virgin Gorda (VGYLI).

The Institute brings the Stone Soup fable to life, inspiring people to give their gifts so together we can feed the hunger in our hearts and the hunger in our world. The 100 life-changing stories serve as our **touchstone**. We use these stories to teach values: empathy & authenticity and inspire our youth to find their moral compass, a true north as young people navigate important decisions for their life, their community and the world.

The TouchStone Leaders Platform takes The Institute's 20-year investment to an online format so millions around the world will have access to our Stone Soup style leadership training modules and transformative programs. This dynamic new educational strategy offers a wide range of smart tool resources designed for people who dream of a better world and are ready to take action in their life and in their communities. The Platform offers high-touch/high tech in-depth leadership training, access to a vast digital content library and a virtual space to collaborate and learn from others working for change in their communities.

Local-Global Leadership Program

The Institute's BETA 10 week program was held from March 3-May 15 at the Martha's Vineyard Museum in Vineyard Haven. Project Coordinators Gia Winsryg-Ulmer and Grace Burton-Sundman facilitated the sessions with Executive Director, Marianne Larned. Twelve juniors and seniors from Martha's Vineyard Regional High School committed to the BETA Program. The group had equal boys and girls. The group reflected the ethnic diversity of the Island with African American, Brazilian, Wampanoag and New England youth.

Graduation was held at the MVRHS Library on June 8. Teachers and parents were invited.

Local-Global Leadership Theme: Martha's Vineyard is a rural community with its eye on the world. Many MVYLI youth are world travelers. The stories *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes* feature 29 countries and 65 U.S. communities. The goal is to use the stories and Education Curriculum to develop skills essential for 21st Century leaders.

MVYLI is focused on writing, critical thinking, problem solving, expanding youth horizons and helping them think about their future.

Superintendent Matt D'Andrea

The Educational Experience

The Institute's Performance Metrics measures the 21st Century skills taught in the BETA Program: Adaptability, Communication, Critical-thinking, Conflict-Resolution, Teamwork, Project Management, and Problem Solving. The BETA Program focused on developing these skills were developed through readings stories from the book, *Stone Soup for the World*, hands-on exercises and connecting with communities around the globe. Youth were able to connect with each other and develop skills in a powerful way during the BETA Program. Youth learned about the Platform and made recommendations for how we can maximize its impact with other youth.

Outcomes

1. Performance Metrics Highlights

- **Improvement average: 14.2 points**

- Areas with most improvement:

Communication: + 20 points in total (average of +4 points)

Adaptability: +11 points (average of 2.2 points)

- Student with highest improvement: Ali Barlett: + 21 points and Bella Chimes: + 14 points
- Most dramatic change: Daniel Gaines improved by 7 points his communications skills
- Second most dramatic change: Ali Barlett improved by 6 points her critical thinking skills

2. Projects Developed by Youth During BETA Program

- **MVYLI Service Leadership** matches Vineyard youth with volunteer opportunities www.volufind.com

- **Vineyard Youth Opportunities:** online resource for Vineyard youth to connect with programs & services.

- **MVYLI Voices Survey** to engage students, educators and administration in a dialogue about how to improve the school culture and learning environment at Martha's Vineyard Regional High School.

- **MVYLI Blue Map & Virtual Field Station Project:** www.virtualfieldstation.com

An educational tool for students to access scientific research from Vineyard organizations on our marine environment for science fair projects as well as internships, summer jobs.

3. MVYLI Youth Skyped with Holyoke BETA site and Platform developers in the Philippines

4. MVYLI Youth Success: This year MVYLI has the largest group of seniors (15) - all are attending 4-year colleges. Five received full scholarships.

5. Youth Enthusiastic Response on BETA Program

During the BETA Program youth were enthusiastic about using the Platform and excited about its future use.

People around the world will be able to use this Platform in ways to connect with others. This Platform will help to break barriers between people around the world and help us connect as one.

Aurora Austin

The Platform serves a good purpose, it gives us the outlet to reflect and collect our thoughts about the session in constructive and thoughtful way and to really comprehend what we learned, felt and accomplished (that) day.

Bella Chimes

I learned that when tackling a huge problem, any little bit helps and makes a difference and baby steps lead to bigger steps.

Cooper Bennett

The story we read taught me that maybe sometimes the issue cannot be solved simply by one person, but everyone instead. Everyone needs to be apart of making a change.

Bella Chimes

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I learned that it's best to not sit back and over-think a great idea. If you have an idea that you think would make a difference in your life, your community's life, or anyone's life, you should go through with it and act on it in a timely manner. **Chris Aring**

I learned from our group that we are all open to each others ideas and are trustworthy.

Ali Barlett

I think the group activity was good to help our understanding of communication and practice it by expressing what we thought should be included in our presentation.

Jack Murray

I learned we should be accepting, and be willing to forgive a wrong someone has made in order to move forward.

Skyler Cameron

Breaking down the components of communication really gives you a better understanding of how to work on the parts you may be weak on such as listening or speaking your mind.

Bella Chimes

The Platform could be used to create change in countries with a lack of resources. They could use this for students who don't necessarily have access to programs that give them the resources to pursue the things they want to do in the future. It can connect them with successful people in their community or even around the world to guide them.

Bella Chimes

The BETA Sessions

- **Session 1: Leadership Community:** We read *Stone Soup Magic* and introduced how the Platform would be integrated into each session. Each student brought an iPad or computer, or we provided one.
- **Session 2: Teamwork:** We read *The Great Martha's Vineyard Barn Raising* and shared experiences of being part of a project that required teamwork.
- **Session 3: Communications:** We read *Freedom From The Madness*, where Mahatma Gandhi uses non-violence as a form of powerful non-verbal communication. We then shared pieces of our personal stories.
- **Session 4: Problem-Solving:** We read *The Heavens Open* about the Peaceful People's Revolution in the Philippines. We learned about the problem-solving process through a hands-on problem solving activity.
- **Session 5: Conflict Resolution:** We read the story, *Democracy in Action*, about the work of Ada Deer who fought for and won the right for her Wisconsin Tribe to be reinstated. We also watched the trailer to "We Still Live Here" about Wampanoag Tribe reclaiming it's language and drew parallels between the two stories.
- **Session 6: Critical Thinking Skills:** We read *Fulfilling Martin's Dream*, about how Dr. King inspired Chicago businessman to create the national mentoring organization, Inroads to support young people of color. We brainstormed ideas for an online service projects serving youth that could be done through the Platform.
- **Session 7: Project Management:** We read *Tree People*, about a 16 year old youth who planted a million trees in Los Angeles. MVYLI youth also began to define two projects that they want to put into action.
- **Session 8: Time Management:** We read *The Power of an Idea* about a 15 year old high school student who organized a system for cafeteria food to be distributed to homeless shelters in Florida. We used the Institute's time management worksheets to fine-tune our own project timelines.
- **Session 9: Adaptability:** We read *The Businessman with a Heart* about Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Muhammad Yunus who founded the successful Grameen Bank to give micro-credit loans to empower women to develop their own businesses. MVYLI youth launched their online service projects and explored the power of
- **Session 10: Professionalism: She Kept Her Promises** about Eleanor Roosevelt's leadership. We watched the **MVYLI Job Shadow Day Video** featuring the youth and their mentors.

The Platform

The TouchStone Leaders Platform provides Leadership Educators with the resources and tools to facilitate and manage powerful leadership trainings and to collaborate with other educators in the field. For youth, the Platform is a place to connect with other program participants and educators, share reflections, set goals, access training materials and much more.

Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative

For the last 6 years, the Institute has developed a comprehensive year-round program for Vineyard youth to develop "21st Century Skills." Through its year-round mentorship program and annual weeklong Leadership Summit, MVYLI aspires to build bridges between the classroom and the Island's real life struggles for equality and sustainability. The work of MVYLI is in building leadership, communication, personal confidence, community, building, and *internal* motivation. MVYLI youth have the motivation to lead them to success in life.

Proposed Collaboration with MVRHS Leadership Class

In September 2015, in partnership with Kevin McGrath, MVRHS Librarian, MVYLI Project Coordinator, Advisory Council members and MVYLI youth Chris Aring, we conducted a preliminary planning process with MVRHS Leadership Class teacher to explore the possibility of collaborating with the Institute's Platform. While we learned about the challenges and opportunities facing the teacher, it was determined that this wasn't a good time to pursue this project. (See attached **Summary of The Institute's Lessons Learned 2015**)

MVYLI BETA Program as MVRHS Leadership Class

Upon completion of the BETA Program, MVYLI youth were invited to share their thoughts about the proposed collaboration with MVRHS' Leadership Class.

Yes! We should because the Leadership Class at MVRHS is lacking. We should share it with others so that they can have an opportunity to learn the necessary leadership skills for life – which are taught very well at MVYLI. This program teaches many skills not found within the classroom.

Chris Aring

We could use this Leadership Course to give MVRHS students the ability to work on the fundamentals of leadership. To get better at something its important to break it down and look at the pieces and try to work on them. Thank you for spending these 10 weeks with us and helping us to improve and grow. You guys are lovely!

Bella Chimes

I believe this Leadership Course would be a very useful course to the MVRHS Leadership Class and more. It teaches interesting and important leadership components.

Daniel Gaines

This Leadership Course should be open to not only students but for people of all ages! It is very helpful for learning leadership skills. The main problem with the opening it to the public is that they are busy and this is very time consuming. I had a great time and it was very helpful.

Cooper Bennett

This Leadership Course would be beneficial to high school students because it is an original course that helps teen grow. There isn't another course like this that teaches life skills. It would be a very beneficial opportunity.

Ali Bartlett

Feedback on Proposed Transition to MVRHS Leadership Class

- One story a week allows students to delve more deeply into the values, lessons learned.
- Focus on small group work since the class is about 30 students.
- Engage MVYLI students from BETA Program to help facilitate a weekly class.
- Work from a template so teachers/students adapt the curriculum using the book and curriculum toolbox.
- Dedicate one week to understand the Platform and how to use the different features. VERY quickly simply.
- Create incentives that impact their high school GPA.

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Platform Enhancements: Youth Recommendations

- **They want to know what is going on on-island** in the way of free or low-cost educational courses targeting their age group. So we should create a feature where they can learn about what's going on that month or even that week. We get them to sign on by offering them a place to learn more about events.
- Youth stay logged on (engaged, exploring the feature, exploring more of the site because of this feature, etc. and so on because) and come back because:
- Weekly updates about new courses or workshops (ex. the VH Library's Adult Lecture Series with different lecture each week).
- Course of the Week features a different site (like Coursera) each week with a link to a specific course. They should be engaged by how its personalized. If it's a course we have taken we can highlight and explain it that much more.

Youth Want Online Tutoring

- Create a feature where they can talk to a teacher, TA or other student (A forum they can post questions).
- Provide a place for them to sign up for a online tutoring site that can be recommended by the High School.
- A place where they can find other students that can offer tutoring in person, at the high school. (A Craig's List/ Bargain Box, but for tutoring.)
- They stay logged on (engaged, exploring the feature, exploring more of the site because of this feature, etc. and so on because) and come back because they find a means to connect with tutors and get help on current classes or things they are struggling with. It is help that is from the High School (a teacher, TA or other classmates) or approved by the High School so they know its reliable.

Youth want a better way to communicate concerns with the administration.

A way to talk about problems they are having. So we should create a feature where they can post questions for administration (check out the forum posts I created about OUR TOWN HALL MEETINGS.

- They stay logged on (engaged, exploring the feature, exploring more of the site because of this feature, etc. and so on because) and come back because they find a venue for expressing their concerns, sharing ideas, having discussions. We could have someone from administration agree to answering posts.

Youth Want Online College Counselors so we should create a feature where they can talk to recent MVRHS graduates from various schools. A "One-Stop-Shop" for college info.

They stay logged on (engaged, exploring the feature, exploring more of the site because of this feature, etc. and so on because) and come back because they can find out more about colleges without feeling overwhelmed. They can get a sound bite or quick blurb about a certain college from a recent graduate (or any graduate or person living on MV that would want to) that they can relate to (maybe even provide a way to meet these individuals), find the scholarship information from the high school and D.R.E.A.M Act.

Youth want to share their ideas for service projects: Jeans of Teens or websites (Chris and Daniel) and get feedback from other students. This ensures they know how to use the site (they have to create the Wiki, Forum, or Page or whatever to display information and create a Survey or Quiz in order to get feedback form the other students) as well as gets them to log on each week or throughout the week (the other students have to respond to everyone else's service project ideas/complete the Quiz/Survey/answer feedback questions, whatever) and it factors into their participation for the overall course.

The Platform: Lessons Learned & Recommendations

1. Develop a group culture of respect and cooperation

- Set Ground Rules collectively
- Talk about why each one is important
- Do activities and icebreakers that work on developing the values of the ground rules
- Have people self-evaluate their following of the ground rules
- Talk about the power of positive group process

2. Make the TouchStone Leaders Platform a powerful vehicle for learning

- Build “how to use the platform” training into the beginning of the Course
- Provide laptops for each youth so technology doesn’t become a time consuming obstacle to learning.

3. Make Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing key components of the Course

- Build in time for writing, discussion and responding to other’s feedback

4. Create opportunities for group members to practice the skills they are learning

- Facilitate the development of on-line service projects
- Create leadership positions within the course
- Strive to collaborate with the group to develop the Curriculum

5. The Look, Feel & User Experience of the Platform

- Like an “iPad” -- to be sleeker, smoother, more intuitive.
- Create a training tool that looks and acts like social media.
- Users should be able to “share” something easily (your photo album idea, or a website that is related to the topics covered in the course or similar subject matter.
- Users should be able to communicate easily with other youth with similar passions.
- Users can easily find other youth with similar passions to connect with in the first place.
- Users can customize their pages to reflect these passions.



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