

# PRACTICES PROJECT CURRICULUM

The Practices Project Curriculum guides students to investigate their learnings and reflections after a youth theology residency experience through creative project-based learning



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## Introduction to the Practices Project Curriculum:

The Practices Project curriculum is a 15-page resource that guides students to investigate their theological interests after a youth theology residency experience through creative student-directed project-based learning. The resource includes a workshop handout, project checklist, community mentor instructions, and orientation email, quarterly reflections to be submitted over a year of working towards creating and executing the Practices Project. Practice Projects can take the shape of a plethora of ideas: preaching, service projects, leading a bible on race and gender, designing a worship service, scripture poetry online magazine. The options are limitless.

The curriculum itself can be adapted and edit to reflect your context's language and practices. This resource was created to begin during a youth theology residency experience and extend over the course of a year. At the Duke Youth Academy, usually on the residency's penultimate day, students attended a 1.5-hour long Practices Project Workshop. During the workshop, small groups of four-five students and a mentor would brainstorm potential Practices Projects and mock plan one idea (See Page 2 for Practices Project Worksheet Handout).

Once students leave the residency, they have accountability and support to complete the Practices Project. Students work with a community mentor and have bi-monthly (every two months for five sessions) 1-1.5-hour long online gatherings with DYA students. As part of the application process, students identify a community mentor who will provide adult-support in their home context. Community mentors are non-relative adults, typically teachers, youth pastors, or mentors. (See Page 13 for Example Community Mentor Pre-Residency Email).

The bi-monthly online gatherings follow a pattern: students engaging in prayer practice (approximately 10 minutes), theological learning and reflection (approximately 20 minutes), Practices Project check-in (approximately 20 minutes), and closing song or prayer. These meetings can be lead by a combination of mentors from residency and full-time staff at the youth theology program. Ideas for Prayer practices are: *lectio divina*, Ignatius daily exam, silent prayer, a guided prayer exercise. The theological learning and reflection component is led by a mentor on various topics on the mentor's interests or expertise. Past topics have been: Intro to Latinx Theology, Christian Mysticism, Cultural Competency, Living the Church Calendar. Mentors chose to lead a prayer practice or theological learning and reflection session. In the curriculum, it references using Piazza, a platform to view other students' projects. In the final two-three years of DYA, we did not use Piazza; in its place, we simplified collaboration and check-ins in the bi-monthly online gatherings.



## **Practices Projects Workshop Handout**

*The Practices Project is an imaginative reflection on all that DYA has stirred up in you during your week of residency. This project is a holistic endeavor that is documentable (either by word, audio, photo, or video) and reflects a year's worth of theological engagement. Youth who submit the assignments from all four quarters will receive a Youth in Christian Leadership certificate from Duke Divinity School (DDS) and be eligible for DYA alumni scholarships if they matriculate at DDS.*

### **Quarter 1 (July-September): Brainstorming**

1. Consider choosing a scribe, spokesperson and one person's community to have in mind.
2. Pick one person's community.
3. Brainstorm projects that would fit that context.
  
4. Mentor Feedback: Does the project seem too broad or narrow?

### **Quarter 2 (October-December): Planning**

5. Pick a project.
6. Create an action plan: try to think of every detail possible! (Hint: check the project worksheet)
  
7. Mentor Feedback: Are there any details they didn't think about?

### **Quarter 3 (January-March): Executing, Documenting**

1. Decide how you will capture your project to share with DYA.
2. Be prepared to draw an unforeseen circumstances card! How will you respond?
  
3. Mentor Feedback: Would YOU be excited to see/read/watch the project in this way?

### **Quarter 4 (April-June): Reflecting and Presenting**

4. Share your project with the group.
5. How did you decide to document it?
6. Now that you're an expert, do you have any pro-tips to share?



## Practices Project Progress Checklist

*The Practices Project is an imaginative reflection on all that DYA has stirred up in you during your week of residency. This project is a holistic endeavor that is documentable (either by word, audio, photo, or video) and reflects a year's worth of theological engagement. Students who submit three worksheets and complete their project and portfolio will receive a Youth in Christian Leadership certificate from Duke Divinity School (DDS) and be eligible for DYA alumni scholarships if they matriculate at DDS.*

Working with your community mentor, consider how you might connect your experience at DYA to your involvement with your church and community at home.

Use this checklist to help you keep your project on track and remember project deadlines.

### July-September

- Schedule a time to meet with your mentor. In preparation, look over the Student Discernment Worksheet and gather your DYA notes to bring with you.
- Meet with your mentor and fill out the First Quarter Student Discernment Worksheet.
- Submit the worksheet to [duyouth@div.duke.edu](mailto:duyouth@div.duke.edu) by September 30<sup>th</sup>

### October-December

- Check out everyone's projects on Piazza and send a few notes of encouragement.
- Finalize what your project is going to be.
- With your community mentor, create an action plan with the steps you need to implement your project.
- Submit the Student Design Worksheet to [duyouth@div.duke.edu](mailto:duyouth@div.duke.edu) by January 15<sup>th</sup>.

### January-March

- Begin preparing for your project.
- Complete the Third Quarter Student Deployment Worksheet with your community mentor.
- Schedule a time for a post-project reflection meeting with your DYA mentor.
- Consider how you will present your project when you share it with DYA.
- Submit your third quarter worksheet to [duyouth@div.duke.edu](mailto:duyouth@div.duke.edu) by March 31<sup>th</sup>.
- Continue your preparations.

### April-June

- Implement your project!
- Collect and organize the elements you want to be part of your presentation to DYA.
- Meet with your community mentor to reflect on the project and your experience.
- Complete the Final Quarter Documentation and Reflection assignment.
- Submit the three pieces of your project to [duyouth@div.duke.edu](mailto:duyouth@div.duke.edu) by June 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Come celebrate your accomplishment with us at the DYA Alumni Celebration on June 27<sup>th</sup>!



## Practices Project First Quarter Curriculum Student Discernment Worksheet

Due: September 30<sup>th</sup>

Meetings with your community mentor are important for reflecting on what you are learning about practicing your Christian faith in your home community, anticipating challenges in your Practices Project, and reflecting on how this experience shapes future decisions you will make about life, career, studies, faith, and relationships.

Work with your community mentor to complete the following sections. When the two of you have crafted a working thesis for your P2 (Practices Project), **please return this document via email to [duyouth@div.duke.edu](mailto:duyouth@div.duke.edu)** and post your thesis on Piazza.

### Step 1: Determine an area of practice

Brainstorm with your community mentor a few areas of Christian theology and Christian practice that DYA has brought to the forefront for you. (Get a big fresh piece of paper for this portion or jot some notes below).

Which one of those word/phrases about practice stand out to you the most? Why?

### Step 2: Consider an intersection with your community

How do you think the area of practice you are most interested in might relate to the lives of those in your faith community? Will it meet them where they are? Will it introduce something new? How will it support them towards a life of deeper faithfulness and formation?

Discuss with your community mentor how your interest might best intersect with your faith community.

**Step 3: Draft a thesis statement**

Work with your community mentor to draft a working thesis statement that describes how your potential project will combine your area of interest and the context of your congregation/community. Don't worry if your thesis shifts a bit as you continue researching and planning for your project.

**Community Mentor Reflections:**

Signatures

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Community Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_



## Practices Project First Quarter Curriculum Community Mentor Instructions

*Thank you for committing to mentor this student as he or she continues the theological reflections sparked by Duke Youth Academy (DYA). It is so important for our students to have a space in their home communities to explore what they have learned during their residency at Duke, and your wisdom and guidance at this stage in their journey is invaluable.*

### **Objective(s):**

- Reflect and review the experience of DYA Residential life.
- Facilitate the student's **discernment** towards designing a Practices Project (P2).

### **Step 1: Reflect on Residential Life (15-25 mins)**

Consider beginning the first objective before your first meeting by inviting the student to begin the process of reflecting on DYA residency before you connect. Encourage the student to come with their DYA binder, notes, or particular points of interest. There should be plenty to talk about from our power-packed week. It may take the student some time to find the words to articulate all that has happened during DYA, but know that a lot could be discussed. It will be impossible to cover it all but note the things that stand out most from the student's recollection. Keep a sensitive ear to what elements the student is most excited to report.

### **Potential questions to begin your discussion:**

#### **Lectures:**

- Who was your favorite lecturer? Why?
- Was there a particular day/content that stuck out to you? Why do you think it did?

#### **Worship Workshops and Planning:**

- What did you learn about worship and thoughtfully planning a worship gathering/service?
- What ways did that make you think or rethink how we plan and conduct worship here at our congregation?

#### **Mentor Group and Living Theology Workshops:**

- During the week of residency, were there ideas, practices, or conversations that stuck out to you during your mentoring sessions? Was there something in your time together that has made you think differently now?
- Which of the living theology workshops are you still thinking about?

### **Step 2: Facilitate the student's discernment towards designing a Practices Project (P2) (20-30 mins)**

The Student Discernment Worksheet (pages 1-2) will guide you through this process.



The Practices Project is an imaginative reflection on all that Duke Youth Academy has stirred up in the life of your student. This project is a holistic endeavor that is documentable (either in word, audio, photo, or video) and reflects a year's worth of theological engagement. Your role in this project is the facilitation of their Discernment, Design, Deployment, and Documentation. Help the student continue to engage theologically with what they have learned from DYA, where the student is both personally and contextually. You understand your ecclesial community and neighborhood better than anyone else in this student's life. This conversation will help your student identify where they are feeling the most joy and the most tension.

*At the end of this first quarter meeting with your student, they should have a fairly clear sense of what they might be doing for their project.*

### **Step 3: Prayer and Planning for your next meeting (5 mins)**

In October-December, your student will be responsible for creating a plan of action for their project. Your second-quarter meeting can focus on the details and design of their project.



## Practices Project Second Quarter Student Design Worksheet

Due: January 15<sup>th</sup>

Work with your community mentor to complete the following sections. When you have created your plan for your P2 (Practices Project), **please return this document via email to [duyouth@div.duke.edu](mailto:duyouth@div.duke.edu).**

Project Title:

Estimate Project Begin/End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Important Dates:

Resources I Need to Secure:

People I Need to Contact:

Materials Checklist:

- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_



## Practices Project Second Quarter Curriculum Community Mentor Instructions

### Objective(s):

- Discuss the online DYA conversations or the student's recent experiences in their church.
- Assist the student's development of his/her Practices Project (P2) plan.

### Discuss student's recent faith experience

Questions we often ask at DYA meetings:

- Where have you experienced God's presence and absence lately?
- How is God moving in your life and the lives of the people around you?
- How do you practice paying attention to God's activity in the world?

### Developing the Practices Project Plan

#### Scope:

- What is going to happen?
- Where will it take place?
- When will you schedule it?
- How will you go about accomplishing the work to achieve the project?

#### Timeframe:

- How much time will you need to prepare for your project?
- Are there additional layers of research you need to conduct?
- Are there additional resources you need to secure?
- How much time will you need to conduct your project?

#### Requirements and Resources:

- Who are the people you will need to talk with about your projects?
- What are the resources you anticipate that you will need?

#### Project Specifics:

- What are some issues, complications, or challenges that may arise?
- What are some contingency plans in case this project has to change or be rescheduled?



## Practices Project Third Quarter Curriculum Student Deployment Worksheet

**Due: March 31<sup>st</sup>**

Work with your community mentor to walk through the following FAQ. When you are finished, **please return this document via email to [duyouth@div.duke.edu](mailto:duyouth@div.duke.edu).**

Project Begin/End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Does it all happen on one day? Is it set to happen outside? If so, do I have an inclement weather plan?

### Venue and Materials:

Where is this happening? What will I need? What will the venue already have? What should I bring, borrow, or secure?

### Awareness and Outreach:

Who is invited to this project? How will I tell them what they need to know? What is the timeline for engaging those that this project will involve? Will those participating/supporting the project know what to expect, what to bring, and how to respond?

### Support:

Will I need others to assist in the successful enactment of this project? If so, how many supporters and helpers will I need? What will their roles be? Who will I ask to fill these roles? How will I communicate what my goals are for this project and what I will need them to do?

### Documentation:

How do I want to present my project to DYA in my final reflection? Should I capture this on video, audio, or with pictures? Is there something that participants will generate that I ought to capture or document? Is there a survey tool that I could use to gather more data about the success of my project?



## **Practices Project Third Quarter Curriculum Community Mentor Instructions**

### **Objective(s):**

- Discuss the online DYA meetings or other relevant theological conversations in which the student has participated.
- Provide insight towards the student's deployment of his or her Practices Project.
- Set a time to discuss the student's this experience once the project has concluded.

### **Discuss student's recent faith experience**

Questions we often ask at DYA meetings:

- Where have you experienced God's presence and absence lately?
- How is God moving in your life and in the lives of the people around you?
- How do you practice paying attention to God's activity in the world?

### **Project planning**

Your involvement at this stage of your student's project development and deployment will vary based upon the requirements of their project. If the project is happening in the midst of your community, you may be able to direct the student to resources and offer direction. If the student's project is happening over the course of several days or weeks, your intermittent presence and support might be the best offering you can give. Encouragement and affirmation are some of your best tools. Your primary focus at this time is to help your student think through all the variables and set him or her up for success.

A key area of support that you can give to your student is to remind them to document their work as they do it. Even though we want all students to experience success in their projects, we hope that the process of reflection in the midst of their work will cultivate an even deeper theological awareness.

### **Prayer and Planning for your next meeting**

**Before you conclude this meeting set a time for a reflection meeting after the project has concluded.**



## Practices Project Final Quarter Documentation and Reflection

You have completed your practices project. Congratulations!

The final step in this process is reflecting and documenting your project. As you experienced during your time at DYA, sometimes the most important learning happens when we reflect on our experiences. In order to receive your certificate and be eligible for future scholarships at Duke Divinity School, you must complete the Practices Project Portfolio, described below, by June 1st.

### Components of your Practices Project Portfolio:

**Documentation:** a 1-page description of your project explaining what you did, who participated, and when it happened.

- Briefly describe your project.
- Why did you choose this project? Why was it a good project for you? For your church/youth group?
- When did you do it?
- How much preparation was involved?
- What roadblocks did you meet?

**Reflection:** a 1-2 page exploration of the reasons why you chose the project, the theological themes behind the project, and what you discovered about yourself, God, and your calling as a Christian in the process.

- What did you learn about yourself? Your church? Practicing your faith?
- How did your project connect to your DYA residency experience?
- Did your project raise new questions for you?
- How will you continue to practice your faith in light of these experiences?
- What did you enjoy the most/least and why?

**Presentation:** Share a piece of your hard work with us. Beyond the words of your reflection, we would love to see, hear, touch, or taste a portion of what you did. This could be a collection of pictures, an art piece, an audio composition, a narrative video, or something multimedia. It can be as creative as your project was as long as it captures what you did so that we can save it and share it with past and future DYA folks. We want to see and hear about your work!

**Your final and submitted project should be about 2-3 pages of writing and a visual/creative element to share sent to [duyouth@div.duke.edu](mailto:duyouth@div.duke.edu) before June 1, 2019.**

**Formatting:** Use standard formatting for this final project (typed, double-spaced in a legible 12 pt. font). Submit the written portions in a Microsoft Word document and the creative element in a digital medium, zip file, PDF, etc.

*If you are joining us for the DYA Alumni celebration, you are encouraged to bring your photos, artwork, or other materials and share a brief presentation about your Practices Project.*



## Example Community Mentor Pre-Residency Email

*Note this email can be adapted to your context  
to orient Community Mentors and the Practices Project  
Curriculum found on pages 3 - 12*

Dear Community Mentor,

The staff at Duke Youth Academy (DYA) is busy getting ready for your student's arrival! Students and staff from all over the United States (and the world!) will be gathering June 18-24 on Duke University's campus for a week filled with worship, community, theological reflection, and fun.

We are so thankful for your commitment to walk with your student in the academic year following their residency at Duke. At the end of the residency, students return home excited about the Church and full of questions about what it means to live as a Christian in their home communities. We hope that the time you spend with your student will provide space for them to continue reflecting on their experience at DYA and how everything they learned on campus can be translated into their lives at home through their Practices Project. We have attached the Practices Project Curriculum that your student will receive during their residency for your perusal.

Your experience living out your faith in your community will be invaluable to your student and we're so excited to see the ways the Spirit will work in and through this mentoring relationship. If at any time during the year you have questions, please feel free to reach out to the DYA office ([duyouth@div.duke.edu](mailto:duyouth@div.duke.edu), 919-613-5323).

While your student is away at Duke, we invite you to join us in these powerful and important ways:

- **Pray for the DYA 2017 community**  
Hold DYA students and staff in your prayers throughout the week as we swim in our baptismal waters.
- **Follow our journey**  
We'll be sharing our journey on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) (@dyastories). Follow along!
- **Alumni Brunch and Celebration**  
If you are local to the Durham area, you are invited to join us in a celebration of the 2017 DYA community and the ongoing work of DYA in the lives of student and staff alumni on June 24th. See below for event details and registration. The celebration begins at 10am in The Divinity Cafe and is followed by worship in Goodson Chapel. [Register before June 22!](#)

In Christ,

Alaina Kleinbeck, DYA Director

Sarah Seibert, DYA Assistant Director