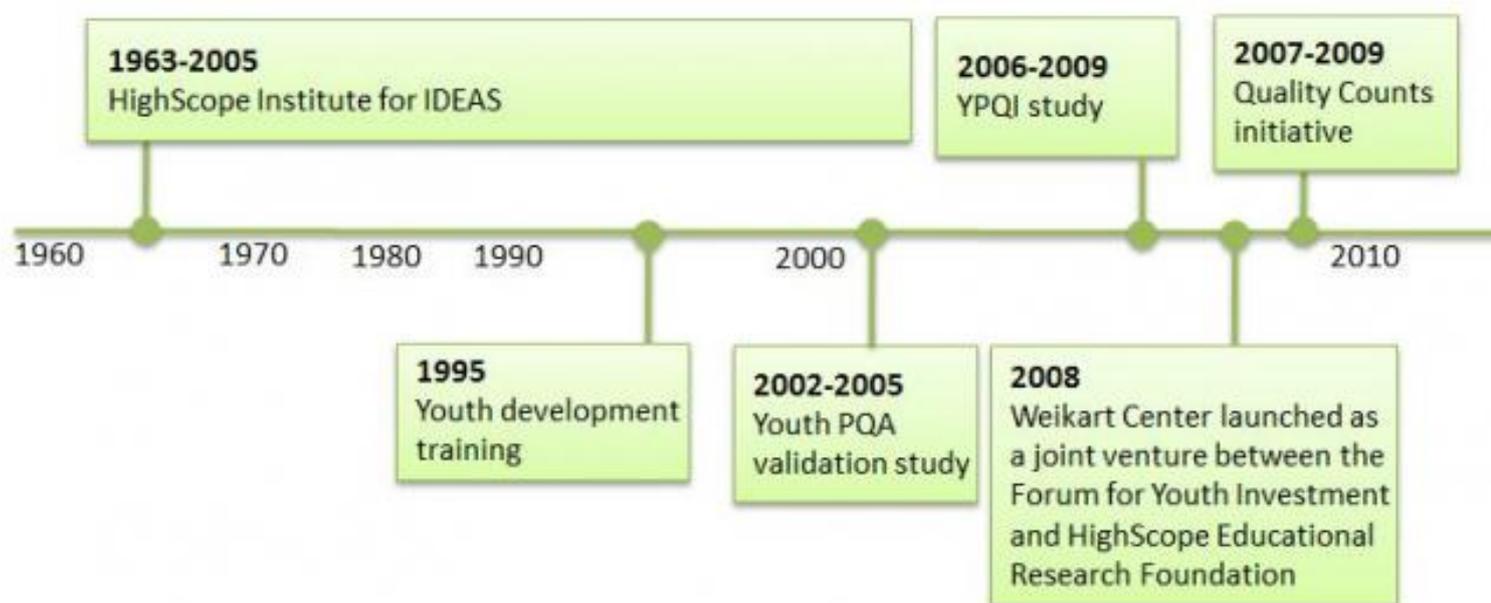


History

The David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality was launched in January 2008 under the leadership of Dr. Charles Smith, as a joint venture of the [Forum for Youth Investment](#) [1] and the [HighScope Educational Research Foundation](#) [2]. At the conclusion of the joint venture with HighScope in 2010, the Weikart Center became a permanent part of the Forum.



This history began in 1963, when David P. Weikart founded the HighScope Summer camp, later called the [Institute for IDEAS](#) [3]. This residential, educational program provided summer learning experiences in the arts and sciences for thousands of youth from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Participants included teens from disadvantaged urban and rural areas as well as international students. The Institute utilized a positive youth development approach long before this was a common phrase.

In the late 1990s HighScope's Youth Development Group took the learning approach developed at the [Institute for IDEAS](#) [3] and delivered training for youth workers. These workshops, grounded in our direct experience and positive youth development research, evolved into what is currently our [Youth Work Methods series](#) [4].

In 2005 the [Youth Program Quality Assessment](#) [5] (Youth PQA) was published after a multi-year study funded by the William T. Grant Foundation demonstrated that the observational assessment instrument was valid and reliable. We then began developing workshops and supports to help practitioners use this tool effectively for assessment and improvement. The Youth PQA and related supports form the basis for network quality improvement initiatives across the country. The Youth PQA was also a critical part of the multi-state [Quality Counts initiative](#) [6].

Between 2006 and 2009 the William T. Grant Foundation funded the Youth Program Quality Intervention study, a randomized control trial of this systematic approach to quality improvement.

The Ready by 21 Quality Counts initiative, from 2007-2009, was focused on improving the quality and reach of youth programs and strengthening local and state policies that guide resource allocation, accountability and workforce development. With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Atlantic Philanthropies, the Ready by 21 Quality Counts initiative provided community, agency and elected leaders from 7 cities and 5 states across the country with a bold challenge, an infusion of national and local momentum and an accompanying suite of policy-building strategies and tools. Quality Counts demonstrated the demand for and effectiveness of the Weikart Center's quality improvement offerings.

Between 2014-2017, the Susan Crown Exchange (SCE) funded the [Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Challenge](#) [7] to identify promising practices for building SEL skills with vulnerable adolescents and then develop a method for taking these practices to scale in thousands of OST settings.

In 2018 the Weikart Center celebrated its 10th anniversary and announced the selection of Dr. Kimberly Robinson as the new managing director.

Today, Weikart Center youth program quality improvement efforts are underway in over 135 networks across the nation, in Canada, Mexico, and the United Kingdom.

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[4] http://cypq.org/products_and_services/training/YWM

[5] <http://cypq.org/assessment>

[6] <http://forumfyi.org/qc>

[7] <http://cypq.org/SELChallenge>