The Power of Youth Adult Partnerships in Advisory Boards and Councils

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Introductions

- Name
- Where You Are From
- Program Area
- What do you hope to get out of today’s session
Adults in my community value youth
The Reality

- 89,366 6th-12th graders surveyed across the U.S.
- 50% of youth report that they have support from three or more non-parent adults.
- 25% of youth feel that adults in their community value them.
- 32% of young people feel that they are given useful roles in the community.
- 33% of young people know how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 45% of youth feel that they have control over things that happen to them.

Michigan 4-H Guiding Principles

- Youth develop positive relationships with adults and peers.
- Youth are physically and emotionally safe.
- Youth are actively engaged in their own development.
- Youth are considered participants rather than recipients in the learning process.
- Youth develop skills that help them succeed.
- Youth recognize, understand and appreciate multiculturalism.
- Youth grow and contribute as active citizens through service and leadership.
Youth-Adult Partnerships

- Integrates youth’s realistic perspectives and skills with professional adults’ experience and wisdom
- Offers each party the opportunity to make suggestions and decisions
- Recognizes the values and contributions of each
- Allows youth and adults to work in full partnership envisioning, developing, implementing and evaluating programs.
WHY PARTNER WITH YOUTH?

- Benefits for youth
- Benefits for adults
- Benefits for communities
Benefits for Youth

- Life skills- leadership, planning, and teamwork
- Sense of belonging and pride
- Commitment to community
- Civic awareness
- Capacity to care and a desire to change and improve the lives of others
- Respect and acceptance from adults

Benefits for Adults

- Information about needs, concerns, and interests of youth
- Satisfaction - seeing youth succeed
- Feedback about existing programs.
- Innovative ideas, creative, energy, and enthusiasm.
- New perspectives on decision-making and community problem-solving.
- Opportunities to foster active community members for the future.

Benefits for Communities

- Creativity to solve critical problems
- Mutual understanding and increased trust between youth and adults
- Fresh perspectives on policy-making
- Citizens who are more knowledgeable and invested in community
- Young people help clarify and bring focus to the organization’s mission

Benefits for Communities

• More connected and responsive to youth in the community, leading to programming/community improvements
• Communities benefit when multiple and diverse voices are involved in making decisions
• Shows authentic committed to youth development

Levels of Youth Involvement

- Objects
- Recipients
- Resources
- Partners

Innovation Center and National 4-H Council.
Levels of Youth Involvement

- **Youth as Objects**
  1. Adults have control over youth

- **Youth as Recipients**
  2. Adults determine needs and design programs based on what they think is best for youth.
  3. Youth help adults to plan, implement, and evaluate work.

- **Youth as Resources**

- **Youth as Partners**
  4. Youth and adults *share equally* in decision-making power.
Best Practices in YAP’s

• Equal Voice
• Equal Participation
• Equal Role
• Common Goals
• Inclusive Environment
• Open Communication
• Building Relationships
• Mutual Respect
• Deliberate Training and Support

Best Practices in YAP’s

- Youth Determine their own involvement
- Provide Choices
- Positive Approach
- Focus on Skills and Abilities
- Realistic Expectations
- Participate, Support, Assist
- Positive Role Model
- Do, Reflect, Apply

Youth-Adult Partnerships in Practice

Practice makes progress, not perfect.
Youth-Adult Partnerships in Practice
Youth-Adult Partnership in Practice

**Theater/Classroom Style**
- Leader has power by position.
- Participation and interruption by audience is limited.

**U-Shaped Style**
- Equality of membership.
- Good visibility for visual aids.

**Circle Style**
- Democratic: equality is apparent.
- Great visibility of participants.
- Obvious body language.
- Excellent participation.
Youth-Adult Partnerships in Practice
Youth-Adult Partnerships in Practice
Youth-Adult Partnerships in Practice
Youth-Adult Partnerships in Practice

IT’S A PROCESS, IT’S A PROCESS, IT’S A PROCESS; CHANGE TAKES TIME.
Youth-Adult Partnerships in Practice
• Don’t decide what youth should do
• Youth actively choose their roles and responsibilities
• Don’t dumb it down for youth -- don’t reduce the significance of the role
• Don’t have them represent all youth --- youth are individuals and should represent themselves
• Clear roles, responsibilities and task ---- this is important for everyone joining the council
• Empower them to make decisions
If Youth-Adult Partnerships are so great, why don’t they happen all the time?

- What adults say about youth
- What youth say about adults
- Barriers
What Youth Say About Adults-Challenges Adults Face

- Selfish
- Won’t admit they are wrong
- Power/ “My way”
- Do it by themselves- “Steamroll”
- Ask for opinion then discredit ideas
- Can’t handle youth growing up
- Rules are Rules
- Won’t apologize
- Don’t remember how they were young
What Adults Say About Youth-Challenges Youth Face

- Lack of Experience
- Peer Pressure
- Lack of Patience
- Confusion about Identity
- Priorities
- Fighting Traditions
- Time
- Follow-Through
- Dropping the Ball
Barriers to YAP’s

- Attitudes
  - “Adultism”
- Logistics (schedules, time to meet)
- Organization (culture, rules, bylaws, time involved for adults)
  - Traditional culture “this is the way we’ve always done it.”
- Meeting etiquette
- Fear of Failure

No one likes to fail!

... But failure is an important part of any learning process and it builds Resiliency
of Positive Youth Development

- Confidence – a sense of purpose/future, self-worth, usefulness
- Character – a sense of responsibility, empathy, spirituality
- Competence – a sense of mastery, resourcefulness
- Connection – a sense of belonging, membership, safety
- Contribution – a sense of sharing, power, ownership
• What do we need to do to get youth involved in our meetings?
• How can we make sure youth voice is heard at our meetings?
• How can we make our meetings a welcoming environment for everyone?
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