

Youth and Adults as Full Partners

Goal of Session:

The purpose of this session is to help assess the degree to which young people in your organization have an active voice in making decisions about programs that affect them.

In some organizations young people are actively involved with adults in making important decisions. In other organizations adults make most of the decisions for the young people. Unfortunately, society in general tends to underestimate the potential of young people to make positive contributions to improve the community.

In some cases young people can even be viewed as threats to society or as the source of many of the problems that exist.

DO THE ACTIVITY

**You will need two facilitators for the first part of this activity.

1. Start by outlining the goals of this session. Divide the adults and youth into separate groups. One facilitator will conduct the Adults Only Session and one will conduct the Youth Only Session.
2. Bring both groups back together for final discussion and processing.

ADULTS ONLY SESSION -

Activity: A Trip Down Memory Lane Activity- What was it like to be a Kid?

Take a look at the following statements about young people. Discuss.

Adult Perceptions 1

- because of their experience, adults know what's best for young people
- young people need to be told what to do and how to do it
- young people can run the meeting, but the important decisions should be made by the adults
- young people have no place in adult society
- we've always done it this way, why change?

How are the attitudes represented below different from those of the previous Adult Perceptions?

Adult Perceptions 2

- the opinions of young people should be welcomed and the decisions should be based on those opinions
- young people should be viewed as resources to their community
- young people should be involved in making decisions about programs that affect them, 4-H is specifically designed for youth to practice decision making and leadership skills with adults acting as advisors
- young people should be allowed to fail because it is an important part of the learning process
- young people may take different paths to accomplish tasks than adults would

By challenging some of the conventional assumptions about the appropriate role of young people in society and changing how we interact with young people, we can make significant impacts on their growth and development while simultaneously reducing community problems.

Let's take a look at what we mean by "Youth / Adult Partnerships"

Youth / Adult Partnerships

The essence of youth participation is a partnership between adults and young people which supports joint efforts toward solving community problems and acknowledges the contributions of both parties.

This follows right in line with the Kansas 4-H Youth Development Mission Statement:

Kansas 4-H Youth Development uses unique strategies and opportunities to engage youth in reaching their full potential through partnerships with caring adults.

Now think of the times that you have been involved in a group composed of both adults and youth.

In groups of 5, list on separate sheets of paper at least 5 items

1. What makes it easy to work with youth in these groups or committees?
Collect answers
2. What makes it difficult to work with youth in these groups or committees?
Collect answers

YOUTH ONLY SESSION -

Review the goals of the session. Discuss this definition of Youth / Adult Partnerships.

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Come together as one big group with adults and youth.

Review definition of Youth / Adult Partnerships and Kansas 4-H Youth Development Mission Statement.

Ask the group to list the current Youth / Adult Partnerships that are currently in place in the local 4-H Program. Review responses from both groups. Post responses on wall.

- What makes it difficult to work with youth?
- What makes it difficult to work with adults?
- What makes it easy to work with youth?
- What makes it easy to work with adults?
- Does anyone see any barriers listed here to having a successful partnership?
- What ideas would work to improve these barriers?
- What are the benefits of having youth and adults working together for 4-H?

Activity: A Trip Down Memory Lane- What It's Like to be a Kid?

Objectives:

- A. To help identify specific successes, challenges and the exciting, fun times of growing up.

- B. We know that you know a lot about being a young person, because you've been one!
- C. Your life experiences count. It is an important source of understanding. It influences how you do your work with young people.
- D. Your experiences are both very individual and fundamentally linked to experiences of others.

This trip down memory lane helps us remember why we are here. It will help us recall what it's like being a young person. I'll be asking you to take a trip down memory lane and to the pictures and memories flow by. Go back to the age of when you were in high school. (If you do not feel comfortable doing this please feel free to pass and not participate.)

1. Now relax.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Let your arms go limp.
4. Breathe easy.
5. Wander back to your place of growing up. Picture the streets or roads you walked – your neighborhood or countryside – the yards or fields, the alleys or paths, the places you played, worked or shopped. Picture where you lived.
6. See the rooms where you lived.
7. Picture the people, the family, you lived with.
8. Visit your favorite place in your home.
9. Remember what you did there.
10. Picture a holiday you liked a lot.
11. Who was with you? What did you do?
12. Walk to your school. What did you see?
13. Walk in the front door of the school. How do you feel? What does it smell like? Wonder down the hallways.
14. Open your eyes and return to the present.

There are some differences as well as similarities between the way that each of us experiences growing up. There are differences as well as similarities in the lives of the young people we work with. Please share some of the highlights, some sharp memories you found especially interesting.

(Write them down on flip chart)

Now we'll compare the list of your childhood experiences with those of today? Are there similarities? What are the differences?

Emphasize:

- There are similarities and differences in behaviors, humor, fear, and challenges of being a young person.
- Youth grow up in social, cultural, economic and historical contexts as well as in neighborhoods, different neighborhoods, different regions of the country and it is important to remember the special influences of these contexts and environments on how individuals experience "growing up."
- There is a common experience of youth.
- There is hard work involved in being a child. It is not all fun and games.
- You know a lot about young people and what it means to be a kid.

Sharing our experiences reminds us we know a lot, enlightens our thinking, and widens our options. In our work, we must consider the everyday, experience of being a young person.

We can listen carefully to youth and we can recall our own youth. How does revisiting our own stories and listening to the stories kids tell help us with our work? We call on our past experiences every day, sometimes to enlighten our work – sometimes to blind us to issues.

Youth need:

- ✓ Active programming with a range of things to do
- ✓ One on one attention
- ✓ A sense of belonging
- ✓ Being able to have a say
- ✓ Help to make decisions
- ✓ Knowing their input counts

Adapted by Diane Mack, Youth Development Specialist, NE Area, from the Resource Youth and Adults as Full Partners, Moving Ahead Together Curriculum, USDA / Army School-Age & Teen Project



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