



BUILDING EFFECTIVE YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS



DEFINING YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

Youth-adult partnerships

- are cooperative efforts between youth and adults;
- usually begin with a mutual need that impacts both youth and adults;
- benefit both members of the partnership and the community; and,
- are built on respect, communication, investment (training and development) and meaningful involvement.

BUILDING YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

As youth and adults work together to meet community needs, an intergenerational partnership can be built and strengthened. Remember a few basic principles and values of partnerships.

- Acknowledge that everyone has something to say and that everyone should be listened to equally.
- Adults should publicly say that they respect youth, and young people should publicly say that they respect adults.
- Understand that there is a difference between doing something **for** youth and doing something **with** youth.

Also remember some conditions that must be in place for your partnership to be successful.

- Adults need to be willing to share their power and responsibility.
- Young people need to be willing to gain power and responsibility.
- Both youth and adults need the skills to work successfully together.
- Everyone needs to forget everything they have ever thought about youth and adults as separate groups and start treating them the way they would treat their peers.

Adults need to remember these principles:

- Don't expect more from a young person than you would from another adult.
- Treat young people as individuals; don't make one represent all youth.
- Be careful about interruptions when young people are speaking; youth must feel valued and respected.
- It's OK to ask for help when you don't know how to do something.

Young people need to remember these principles.:

- Criticism doesn't necessarily equate to condescension.
- Adults may not be aware of how capable you are.
- Adults will feel responsible for success or failure of the project.
- It's OK to ask for help when you don't know how to do something.

Material taken from Youth Adult Partnerships: A Training Manual by The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, National Network for Youth, Youth Leadership Institute.

BUILDING YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

When youth voice is supported, youth-adult partnerships can be successfully created. Healthy youth-adult partnerships take commitment from both young people and adults.

Respect

- A culture of respect shatters stereotypes based on age.
- Young people respect adults who listen and who ask challenging questions.
- Adults respect youth who invite them to share their skills, experiences, and resources.
- A culture of respect provides young people the opportunity to act on their dreams and learn from their mistakes.

Communication

- Young people are best heard when adults step back and young people speak up.
- Adults are best heard when they are straight up and explain where they are coming from.
- Everyone's ideas and opinions are valuable and must be heard.

Investment

- Young people and adults must first set their fears aside and take a chance on the other people.
- Adults must provide young people with the information, training, and support they will need to succeed. They must also develop their own ability to work with young people.
- Young people must commit their time and energy to do the work and be willing to learn from adults.
- Strong partnerships require patience and courage.

Meaningful Involvement

- Involving young people from the beginning builds ownership.
- Adults need to support young people in taking responsibility based on what they can do, not what they have done.
- Reflection helps everyone appreciate the importance of their work—for themselves, for their program, and for their community.
- Young people and adults must hold each other accountable for all their decisions and actions.
- Young people and adults should continually challenge the impact of their program on the community.

Source: Points of Light Foundation Youth Outreach, from the Youth Voice Project, 1993

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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