Youth Development GUIDE

Engaging young people in after-school programming.

Youth Development Guide

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Acknowledgements

About the Youth Development Framework for Practice

This Youth Development Guide is based on the Youth Development Framework for Practice[i], the work of researchers James Connell and Michelle Gambone, through the Community Action for Youth Project (CAYP). CAYP, a cooperative project of Gambone & Associates and the Institute for Research and Reform in Education, works to strengthen youth-serving organizations and other community institutions through the use of a community action framework for youth development. The framework is based on applied and academic research, as well as on Dr. Gambone and Dr. Connell's fieldwork. CAYP also creates tools to support the use of this framework by organization leaders, funders, evaluators and others, and offers technical support for community-based youth initiatives and programs.

Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD) is grateful for the five year partnership we have enjoyed with Jim and Michelle, who worked side by side with us and a dedicated group of youth development practitioners, funders and policymakers, to create the Youth Development Framework for Practice. The framework has enabled many of us in the youth development community to have deeper, richer conversation about the contributions we can each make to create a stronger support system for our young people. We appreciate Jim and Michelle's generosity of spirit and their willingness to do the hard work of bringing the youth development vision alive at a community level. Many thanks!

Community Advisory Committee

Many thanks to the members of our Community Advisory Committee who shared their expertise, stories, comments, photographs and quotes: Nancy Netherland of the Museum of Children's Art; Reba Rose of Destiny Arts Center; Robyn Richardson and Diana Acevedo of LYRIC; Katie Brackenridge and Claudia Jasin of Jamestown Community Center; Judy Glenn, Lynn Richards, Rebecca Laverdure, and Whitney Morris of Girls Inc. of Alameda County; Verna Springer of Gateway After School Enrichment Program; Ann Birnbaum of Community Bridges Beacon; and Linda Lovelace, Trish Bascom, and Wayne Ho of the San Francisco Unified School District.

Our deepest appreciation goes to all the young people who keep us honest, show us the way, and make the work worthwhile. They deserve the best we can give.

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Opening Remarks

The Youth Development Guide breaks new ground in converting the youth development approach from a set of compelling ideas to concerted and intentional action. This guide takes the linchpins of the developmental approach – the kinds of supports and opportunities youth need to experience in order to attain the outcomes we desire for them – and provides specific and practical advice about how to strengthen individual staff practices and organizational policies to ensure youth have these experiences.

In 1999, Community Action for Youth Project (CAYP), was formed as a joint venture of Gambone & Associates and the Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE). The basis for this Guide and our ongoing collaboration with the Community Network for Youth Development is CAYP's Community Action Framework for Youth Development. Through our work as a national youth development intermediary, we use this framework to organize current knowledge – from research and practical experience – and provide a common language for youth development investors, program operators, staff and youth themselves to use in their conversations about what they do together and what they are trying to accomplish.

While this guide was written for the sponsors, administrators and staff of after school programs, we urge evaluators and researchers in education and other youth development settings to read it as well. In our view, we now have sufficient knowledge about what matters for youth's success to gear up for an even more daunting challenge — figuring out what it takes to plan, implement and sustain high quality experiences for diverse young people during gap periods. The Youth Development Guide provides important tools to begin meeting this challenge in the after school hours and can serve as a model for the type of work that will need to be done in other settings where youth spend time — in schools, families and neighborhoods — if a true community approach to youth development is to be realized.

James P. Connell, Ph.D
Michelle Alberti Gambone, Ph.D
Community Action for Youth Project (CAYP)

Opening Remarks

Our organization's mission is to strengthen the field of youth development by providing youth serving agencies with technical assistance, training and resources, and working with funders and policymakers to align resources to more effectively support youth development efforts. The Youth Development Guide represents many of the learnings we have accumulated over the past ten years working with both community and systems level providers and from research in child and adolescent development, learning, childhood resiliency, and the prevention of high risk behaviors.

We appear to have both the necessary knowledge and agreement on what the critical "turn-keys" are in boosting young people's positive development and readiness to learn. However, front-line workers tell us that their greatest challenge lies in applying this knowledge to the design of youth programs and activities. They also speak of the importance of staff training and support that focuses on these issues, especially when faced with the pressures of program start-up and looming program performance measures. This is particularly true for the rapidly growing number of after-school workers who are mounting new programs throughout California.

This year, CNYD is embarking on a new initiative—the Community School Partnerships Initiative - to support the growing number of community and school partners working together to expand out-of-school learning opportunities for young people. Through our work, we will strive to create a common commitment to the youth development approach in after-school settings and strengthen the capacity of community and school partners to improve youth outcomes through improved youth development practices. We wrote the Youth Development Guide with teachers, after-school workers and youth program leaders in mind. We hope this Guide provides them with an opportunity to examine the youth development approach and further explore how to best support young people through their own organizational and program practices.

Sam Piha
Director of Community School Partnerships
Community Network for Youth Development

Sue Eldredge
Executive Director
Community Network for Youth Development

Opening Remarks

This year, due to tremendous public support and the dedicated work of school teachers, youth workers and neighborhood volunteers across the State, an unprecedented number of young people will participate in after school programs in California.

Historically, after-school programs have been viewed as a way to provide young people with safe, supervised places to spend time, and later to prevent "headline" problems, such as alcohol and other drug use, early pregnancy, juvenile crime and violence, and more recently academic failure. Over time, however, we have learned that deficit-based approaches are not effective. In the words of youth development expert Karen Pittman, "'Problem-free' does not represent the full range of goals most parents have for their children. Further, academic competence alone, while critical, is not enough to ensure success in adolescence or adulthood."

Today, with the benefit of a growing body of research in youth development and resiliency, we know that to contribute positively to young people's learning and healthy development, we must address and meet their broader developmental needs. Further, because these are the same things that young people say they want from programs, providing for these needs is how we can both attract and sustain their involvement in our before and after-school settings.

The Youth Development Guide provides a valuable resource to before and after-school administrators and practitioners as it focuses attention on the supports that matter most: adults and young people developing caring relationships; adults holding high expectations of youth; and adults providing youth with opportunities for meaningful participation. The Guide quickly moves from theory to the day-to-day practices that provide young people with the supports and opportunities they need in order to be increasingly productive, connect with others, and safely and effectively navigate their changing environments. The organizational and youth worker practices offered in the Youth Development Guide serve as essential "threads" that can be woven into any program that seeks to promote learning and broader development, whether it features academic instruction and enrichment, sports, recreation, or the arts.

It is the goal of parents, educators and youth workers, alike, to prepare our young people for the challenges they will face as they mature, and ultimately, to be successful in their adult lives. The youth development approach, as offered in this Youth Development Guide, is essential if we are to meet these goals and support the goals that young people hold for their own futures.

Wade Brynelson, Assistant Superintendent
California Department of Education

Introduction: About this Guide

The first section of this Guide reflects the work of the Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD) in close partnership with youth development researchers Michelle Gambone and James Connell, and with youth-serving agencies, public institutions, policymakers and the funding community throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

What is the Purpose of this Guide?

This Guide is designed to offer an introduction to youth development principles and practices to the diverse group of people involved in creating and implementing after school programs—program directors, school administrators, teachers, staff, volunteers, community partners, and others. We believe that adopting a youth development approach when designing and implementing after school programs can help ensure that young people get the most out of the time they spend in these programs.

The Guide draws on youth development principles and the underlying research to help after school program leaders and staff answer two fundamental questions they face as they design and implement after school programs:

1. What experiences can we provide for young people in our after school programs that will have the greatest positive impact on their lives and contribute to successful learning?

2. What practices can we use in our after school programs to create environments that provide these experiences?

Who Should Read the Guide?

Initially, the Guide will be distributed to after school program sites and school districts throughout the state of California as part of the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership Program (SB 1756). These after school programs are intended to provide academic support for young people ages five to thirteen, using youth development practices. Programs are school-based and are created in partnership with community organizations. It is with these programs in mind that the Guide was written. If you are involved with another kind of youth program, or are a funder, a parent, a policymaker, or someone interested in community development, this book can also serve as a good basic introduction to the field of youth development.

How Should I Use the Guide?

It is our hope that program and school administrators will read this book, and share it with lead program staff. In addition, we hope that parts of the Guide will be shared with the entire program staff, community partners, local policymakers, volunteers, parents, and young people. In an effort to make the text accessible and useful to a wide variety of people, we have included both theoretical background and practical examples and exercises. The Guide is divided into two sections.

Section One

Section One identifies the experiences we can provide in after school programs that will have the greatest positive impact on young people's lives and contribute to successful learning. This section:

- provides background on the origins of the youth development movement and the research underlying this approach;
- outlines the kinds of experiences that research has identified as crucial to helping young people learn and develop into healthy adults;
- points to some of the unique opportunities that after school programs have to provide these important experiences for young people;
- offers an overview of the youth development approach and provides the context for better understanding the strategies described in Section Two.

Section Two

Section Two identifies the practices we can use in our after school programs to create environments that provide the experiences young people need to grow and develop. This section contains hands-on guidance and implementation strategies. The chapters in Section Two can be read all at once, or separately, as it makes sense for your program.

Section Two offers guidance on how to implement five key youth development practices which are crucial to promoting young people's healthy development and creating successful learning environments:

- promoting a sense of safety;
- encouraging relationship building;
- fostering meaningful youth participation;
- providing opportunities for community involvement;
- creating challenging and engaging learning experiences that help participants build skills.

This Guide is just an introduction. Ongoing learning and assessment are vital to the success of any after school program and we strongly urge you to utilize the resources listed for continued support and to provide your staff with training opportunities.

What the Guide is Not

This Guide is not meant to present a prescriptive system that tells you exactly how your program must be structured in order to be successful. There are many different routes to success for young people and programs alike; and different young people in different communities will have different strengths and needs. Rather, regardless of program design or content, this approach helps keep the focus on the developmental outcomes we want for young people and the key experiences we can provide to help them reach those outcomes.

We hope that the insights and tools provided in the Guide will be useful to the teachers, administrators, program staff, and community members who are working hard to help all young people reach their fullest potential.

Glossary

About the Glossary

G

In this section we have listed key terms that are discussed throughout the Youth Development Guide. Each glossary term appears in bold the first time it is used in the text. Feel free to familiarize yourself with the terms and definitions before you move on, or use this section to refer back to specific concepts.

Glossary of Terms

cascading leadership

Cascading leadership refers to the process of young people passing their leadership on to younger or new members of the group. Adults can support cascading leadership by giving younger or less experienced members of the group opportunities to learn leadership skills, and by encouraging older or more experienced members to pass on their skills to others.

challenging / challenging learning experiences

Challenging experiences require participants to stretch beyond their current range of knowledge and skills and offer opportunities to test and master their skills in the real world.

community involvement

Community involvement in this context refers to activities that increase young people's knowledge of the community beyond the program and allow them to give back to the community, and experience a sense of connection to it. These experiences, along with concrete knowledge of the community and its resources, are critical for promoting young people's healthy development and learning. Creating opportunities for community involvement is one of the five key youth development practices described in this guide. (See Chapter 6).

deficits

Deficits refer to young people's participation in problem behaviors, or the risk factors in their lives that suggest they may potentially participate in such behaviors. Deficits are often discussed in connection with "risk factors" in a young person's environment. (See Chapter 1).

deficit approach/deficit based programming

The deficit approach sets "fixing" young people's problem behaviors as the goal of youth programming. Deficit-based programming focuses on preventing or reducing specific problem behaviors among groups of young people who are determined to be at risk for these particular behaviors, based on the presence of certain risk factors in their environments. Deficit-based programs tend to be narrowly focused interventions; program success is defined as the reduction or elimination of the particular negative behaviors. (See Chapter 1).

developmental youth outcomes/developmental outcomes

Developmental youth outcomes are the intermediate milestones that measure young people's progress toward successful early adult outcomes. Developmental outcomes may also be described as the most fundamental skills that young people must learn to successfully transition into healthy adulthood: how to be productive, how to connect with others and how to navigate. After school programs, along with families, schools, and communities, can contribute to these outcomes by helping young people experience a sense of safety, positive relationships, meaningful participation, community involvement, and challenging and engaging learning experiences. No single program can be responsible for young people attaining these developmental youth outcomes. (See Chapter 2).

early adult outcomes

Early adult outcomes articulate what we want young people to be able to do, at a minimum, as they enter adulthood, that would indicate healthy development. The summary we use in this guide includes: achieving economic self-sufficiency, maintaining healthy family and social relationships, and contributing to the community. (See Chapter 2).

engaging /engaging learning experiences

Learning experiences are engaging when they tap into a young person's natural curiosity and interest in discovery, at the same time motivating, rather than discouraging their eagerness to try new activities.

fading facilitation

Fading facilitation refers to the process of an adult leader's presence receding into the background as young people gain the experience and skills to take on more responsibility and more meaningful roles. Fading facilitation is a useful strategy for adults to increase meaningful youth participation.

indicators

Indicators in a youth development context are signs that can be seen and measured showing that a program is effectively implementing a specific practice. In Chapters 3 through 7, some indicators of the presence of key youth development practices are listed under the subheadings What You See and What Young People Might Say.

learning experiences/challenging and engaging learning experiences

Learning experiences are those experiences that allow young people to expand their understanding and knowledge of themselves and their environment and master specific new concepts and skills. We described learning experiences as engaging when they tap into young people's natural curiosity and interest in discovery to motivate, rather than discourage, their eagerness to learn. Learning experiences are challenging when they require young people to "stretch" beyond their current range of knowledge and skills. Creating challenging and engaging learning experiences is one of the five key youth development practices described in this guide. (See Chapter 7).

organizational practices

Organizational practices refer to the policies, structures and actions of an after school program's larger, sponsoring organization, such as a school, school district, or agency. Some examples of organizational practices that support effective youth development practices in after school programs include: maintaining a low youth to staff/volunteer ratio, ensuring the availability of safe and reliable program spaces, and allowing flexibility in allocating program resources. These are outlined briefly in Chapter 2, in the section titled Organizational Practices That Help After School Programs Support Young People. They are also discussed in more detail in connection with each of the five key youth development practices in Chapters 3 through 7.

outcomes

We refer to three types of outcomes in the guide: developmental youth outcomes, early adult outcomes and program outcomes. See definitions for each.

program outcomes/short-term program outcomes

Program outcomes refer to the specific goals or objectives set by a particular after school program. These may include contributing to desired developmental youth outcomes, but may also include shorter-term program-based goals, such as increasing participation by x%. We note some short-term program outcomes that result from effectively implementing key youth development practices in chapters 3 through 7 under the subheading Immediate Benefits.

relationship building

Relationship building is the development of caring, supportive relationships between adults and young people, and among young people and their peers. The experience of these caring relationships is critical for promoting young people's healthy development and learning. When young people experience relationship building in their programs, they build knowledge of adults and peers, gain emotional and practical support from adults and peers, and experience guidance from adults. (Encouraging relationship building is one of the five key youth development practices described in this guide. See Chapter 4).

resiliency/resiliency research

Resiliency is the quality that allows young people to "bounce back", recover from negative experiences or overcome obstacles and risk factors in their lives. Research on young people's resiliency fueled the youth development movement, shifting the focus from young people's deficits and problem behaviors to the environmental factors that help young people succeed. (See Chapter 1).

risk factors

Risk factors refer to the deficits in young people's environments which researchers believe put them "at risk" for engaging in problem behavior and/or having difficulty achieving positive outcomes as young adults.

safety

Safety refers to the experience of physical and emotional safety that young people need in order to learn important life skills they will need in adulthood. When young people experience safety, they know they can depend on the surrounding adults to protect them from physical and emotional harm, and that they will be accepted and valued by their peers. Experiencing safety is crucial to young people's healthy development and learning. Promoting a sense of safety is one of the five key youth development practices described in this guide. (See Chapter 3).

supports and opportunities

In the youth development context, supports and opportunities refer to the crucial support young people need from caring adults and the opportunities they need to grow and develop important skills and competencies. The experience of the five key youth development practices we discuss in this guide are sometimes referred to as the positive "supports and opportunities" critical to young people's healthy development: young people need supports which help them experience a sense of safety and build positive relationships; they need opportunities for meaningful participation, community involvement, and challenging and engaging learning experiences that build skills.

youth development

Youth development refers to the process through which all young people seek ways to meet their basic physical and social needs and to build knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in adolescence and young adulthood.

youth development approach

The youth development approach is an approach to working with young people that defines outcomes based on the developmental needs of youth. In contrast to the deficit approach, the youth development approach calls for providing young people with the key experiences shown to promote healthy development. The youth development approach draws on resiliency research, as well as experience from the field. (See Chapters 1 and 2).

youth development practices

In this guide we identify five key youth development practices which after school programs can implement to ensure that the young people in their programs receive the support they need to learn and grow. The five key practices are: promoting a sense of safety, encouraging relationship building, fostering meaningful youth participation, providing opportunities for community involvement, and creating challenging and engaging learning experiences that build skills. (See Chapter 2 for an overview of these practices and a description of the underpinning research. See Chapters 3 through 7 for detailed descriptions of each practice and guidance on implementing these practices in your after school program).

youth development framework for practice

The Youth Development Framework for Practice is a tool for planning, examining, and evaluating youth programs from a youth development perspective. The framework illustrates the logical link between youth development practices and outcomes for young people. It also shows the connection between practices at the organizational and program levels. The tool was developed by researchers Michelle Gambone and Jim Connell and the Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD). Much of the information in this guide draws on The Youth Development Framework for Practice and the research behind it.

youth leadership

Youth leadership is a term used to describe high levels of youth participation. As programs increase their levels of youth participation, young people increasingly begin to assume leadership roles. (See Chapter 5).

youth participation/meaningful youth participation

Meaningful youth participation refers to activities through which young people participate in decision making, develop and practice leadership skills, and experience a sense of belonging. Experiencing meaningful youth participation is critical to young people's healthy development and learning. Providing opportunities for meaningful youth participation is one of the five key youth development practices discussed in this guide. (See Chapter 5).

i This definition adapted from Advancing Youth Development: A Curriculum For Training Youth Workers. (Academy for Educational Development/Center For Youth Development And Policy Research. Washington, DC: 1996).

SECTION ONE

An Introduction to the Youth Development Approach

Overview: Understanding Youth Development

The youth development approach draws on a substantial body of research about young people's developmental needs and the role that the environment plays in young people's lives as they move through childhood and toward adulthood. It also draws on years of evidence from the field about "what works" in creating environments that promote young people's healthy development and learning. The key youth development principles and practices outlined in this section can be used to measure program effectiveness, and provide clear standards to which we can hold our programs accountable.

These principles and practices can be applied to all after-school programs—regardless of the program's content; they are equally applicable to programs focused on boosting academic achievement, as they are to sports and recreation programs or to programs promoting community service. A youth development approach helps unify all of us around the healthy long term outcomes we want for young people and our contributions along the way. Linked by a shared vision of the future we want for young people, and a common understanding of what it will take to reach this future, we can begin to create a more cohesive system to support our young people.

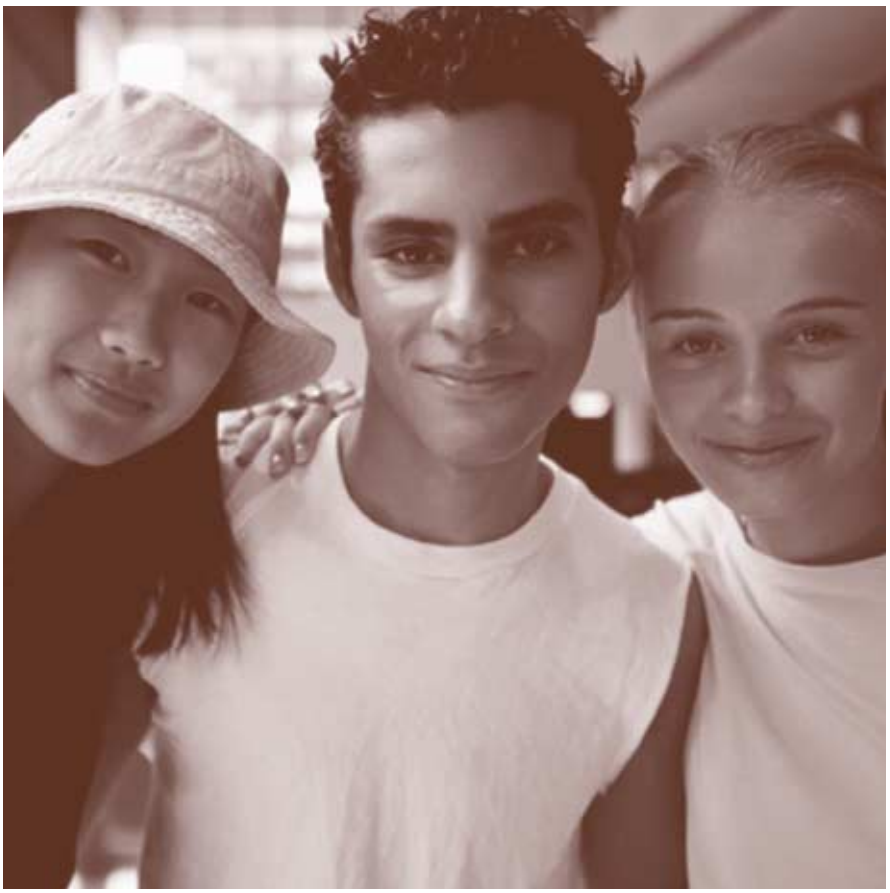
In this chapter, we offer some background on the youth development movement and the fundamental principles and research that form the basis of the youth development approach. In Chapter Two, we go on to outline the kinds of experiences that, from a youth development perspective, young people most need to successfully learn and develop.

The Youth Development Approach

1

Moving beyond problem-fixing and prevention.

CHAPTER 1



Origins of the Youth Development Approach

The youth development approach arose in response to some twenty years of deficit-focused youth policy and programming in the United States, during which time programs focused on young people's **deficits**—that is, their participation in or potential for, "problem behavior." The **deficit approach** called for narrowly focused programs designed to target and "fix" specific problem behaviors, such as teen pregnancy or drug abuse. Program success was defined as the reduction of these behaviors in the target population of young people.

A number of factors help explain why the deficit approach was so widely embraced at the time, including our historical tendency, as a nation, to focus on young people primarily as problems, or potential problems, for our society. More immediately, economic changes over the last forty years had resulted in fewer social supports being available for young people. As many families saw their real earnings decline, it became more common for both parents to work longer hours outside the home to support their families. In addition, more families began to be headed by single parents who had to serve as both primary income providers and care takers. Public schools grew increasingly crowded, leaving teachers with little time to give students individual attention. With this erosion of support, we began to see a rise in problem behavior among young people: increased youth violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and higher school failure, dropout, and teen pregnancy rates[ii]. As citizens began voicing their concern over these problems, policymakers began calling for programs designed to address these specific problem behaviors.

The Deficit Approach

The deficit approach called for intervening when young people exhibited problems, or for identifying those young people "at risk" for problems and trying to prevent them from engaging in specific negative behaviors. This narrow focus on young people's deficits and specific problem behaviors led to the creation of a youth services system that was largely fragmented. Categorical funding often dictated that programs be narrowly focused in order to fit within specific funding categories. The result was a system comprised of many single programs focused on isolated problems: one program focused on preventing drug abuse, while another focused on reducing teen pregnancy rates, and yet another sought to reduce violence among adolescents.

As long-term evaluations of these deficit focused programs became available, they began to show that single-issue programs rarely achieved success in eliminating or even significantly reducing problem behaviors over time. For example, evaluations of one of the largest federal drug abuse prevention programs, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), found no significant reduction in the use of drugs and alcohol among its target population. Other programs showed short term success in meeting their outcomes but had no lasting positive impact on young people. For example, evaluations of the Summer Training and Education Program (STEP), a program providing extra help in academics, life skills, and work experience for "underachieving" adolescents from low-income families, showed that students' gains in reading and math did not continue once they graduated from the program.

Deficit-based programs failed for two major reasons. ***By narrowly focusing on changing specific behaviors, this approach failed to address young people's basic developmental needs***. While much attention was given to educating young people about avoiding a specific negative behavior (how to "say no" to drugs, for example), insufficient attention was paid to meeting young people's broader, underlying needs—such as their need for caring relationships with adults and for opportunities to participate in their communities in meaningful ways. Failure to meet their participants' basic needs limited the amount of influence these behavioral-focused programs could exert over young people. Furthermore, this approach divided young people into two groups: those exhibiting problems or at high risk for problems, and everyone else. Rather than ensure that young people in high risk environments had access to the same kinds of fundamental positive supports that were more readily available in more affluent communities, ***our focus on isolated problems led us to provide different supports for young people deemed "at risk,"*** as illustrated on the next page.

The Deficit Approach

Like the Western medical model, isolate the problem and treat or prevent it...

1. Prevention:
Identify young people "at risk" for problems and "inoculate" them.

2. Treatment:
Intervene after young people manifest problems or are "in crisis."

3. Success:
Young people do not engage in specific problem behaviors.

4. Resulting system:
Many programs, each focused on fixing a single problem.

Traditional Views of Youth Services

	Low Risk Services	Medium Risk	High Risk Services
Low Risk Youth/Communities	• Music/Art • Leadership • Creative Writing • Community Service • Leadership Training • Outdoor Education • Career Guidance • Apprenticeship	• Music/Art • Leadership • Creative Writing • Community Service • Leadership Training • Outdoor Education • Career Guidance • Apprenticeship	• Music/Art • Leadership • Creative Writing • Community Service • Leadership Training • Outdoor Education • Career Guidance • Apprenticeship
Medium Risk	• Music/Art • Leadership • Creative Writing • Community Service • Leadership Training • Outdoor Education • Career Guidance • Apprenticeship	• Pregnancy Prevention • Tutoring • Counseling • Drug Prevention • Mentors	• Pregnancy Prevention • Tutoring • Counseling • Drug Prevention • Mentors
High Risk Youth/Communities	• Music/Art • Leadership • Creative Writing • Community Service • Leadership Training • Outdoor Education • Career Guidance • Apprenticeship	• Pregnancy Prevention • Tutoring • Counseling • Drug Prevention • Mentors	• Vocational Education • Violence Prevention • Remedial Education • Crisis Intervention • Gang Prevention

Our focus on young people's deficits led us to offer different supports for young people living in "high risk" environments.

Resiliency Research

While evaluations were beginning to show the shortfalls of the deficit approach, long-term studies of young people raised in "high-risk" environments provided another important insight. These studies consistently documented that a majority of these young people not only grew up avoiding involvement in problem behaviors, but also developed into healthy and successful adults. Some researchers began to focus more on young people's **resiliency**—their ability to succeed despite the adversity surrounding them—rather than focusing solely on deficits and problem behavior. Researchers began examining the environment surrounding these young people, asking ***what enabled these young people to succeed in the face of so many obstacles?*** In other words, instead of focusing on the risks surrounding young people and the problems they exhibited, researchers began to focus on what helped young people succeed. Studies from this new body of research, known as **resiliency research**, consistently demonstrated that young people who succeeded had the advantage of three critical elements in their lives:

- **caring relationships;**
- **high, clear and fair expectations; and**
- **opportunities for participation and contribution.**

Studies showed that young people fare best when they experience these three key elements continuously and in all the settings where they spend time—with their families, in school, and among their larger communities[iii]. This makes sense, the more consistently young people experience these positive supports and opportunities, the better off they are. Resiliency research underscored the need for taking a broader approach to helping young people succeed, working to strengthen the natural support systems for young people in their homes, schools, and communities.

Resiliency Research

- **RESILIENCY RESEARCH FOCUSES** on young people who succeed in becoming healthy adults despite risks.
- **RESILIENCY RESEARCH ASKS** "What helps these young people succeed in the face of obstacles?"

Influences on Youth Development

Young people's healthy development and learning depends on what they experience in all the settings in their lives: home, school, and larger community.

The three key elements identified above were associated with lower levels of problem behaviors regardless of other risk factors. This led us to begin to recognize that young people deemed "at risk" need the same kinds of rich and wide-ranging supports and opportunities for healthy development that are more readily available to young people in middle class communities. This implied that we should focus resources on helping to ensure that the kinds of opportunities and supports that are more widely available to young people in middle class communities are in place in all communities.

This research also began to shift people's thinking about how best to prevent young people from engaging in problem behaviors. Previous prevention strategies had focused narrowly on teaching young people how to avoid these behaviors (and why they should avoid them). People working with young people began to see that providing the kinds of basic elements described above could be a more effective strategy for preventing young people from becoming involved in self-destructive activities. In addition, young people would be more likely to participate and become invested in programs that they felt were meeting their needs, not just matching adults' agendas. Such programs would have greater influence in young people's lives.

The Youth Development Movement

By the late 1980s, youth development advocates and practitioners began to reshape the way we serve young people. Organization leaders, advocates, and practitioners began to redefine success—for programs and for young people. Rather than defining desired outcomes solely as the prevention or reduction of specific problem behaviors, practitioners working from a youth development approach set a goal of ensuring that young people are "fully prepared" for meeting the challenges facing them as they navigate the difficult path to adulthood. Rather than creating more single-issue programs narrowly focused on problem behaviors, this approach called for concentrating on strengthening the kinds of supports families, schools and neighborhoods could offer their young people. Those adopting a youth development approach also focused their efforts on ensuring the continuity of this support across these different settings. To do this they began working to link schools, families, and neighborhood organizations. This also meant a shift in perspective when thinking about the role of a single program: rather than examining each individual program in isolation, the youth develop-

Leading the Youth Development Movement

- ***The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development*** helped shift the thinking of policymakers nationwide, through publications focusing on how to effectively support young people's healthy development and the important role of community based organizations in this effort.
- ***The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research*** (CYD), under Karen Pittman's leadership, launched a national campaign designed to transform concern about youth problems into public commitment to youth development.
- Academic research, such as the ten-year study that produced ***Urban Sanctuaries***, (Milbrey McLaughlin, Merita Irby and Juliet Langman) highlighted the effective practices and support that community based organizations provide young people.
- ***Public/Private Ventures*** and the ***Search Institute*** further strengthened the research and evaluation base by developing and evaluating large scale youth development demonstration projects.

The field began redefining success. Problem-free is not fully prepared.

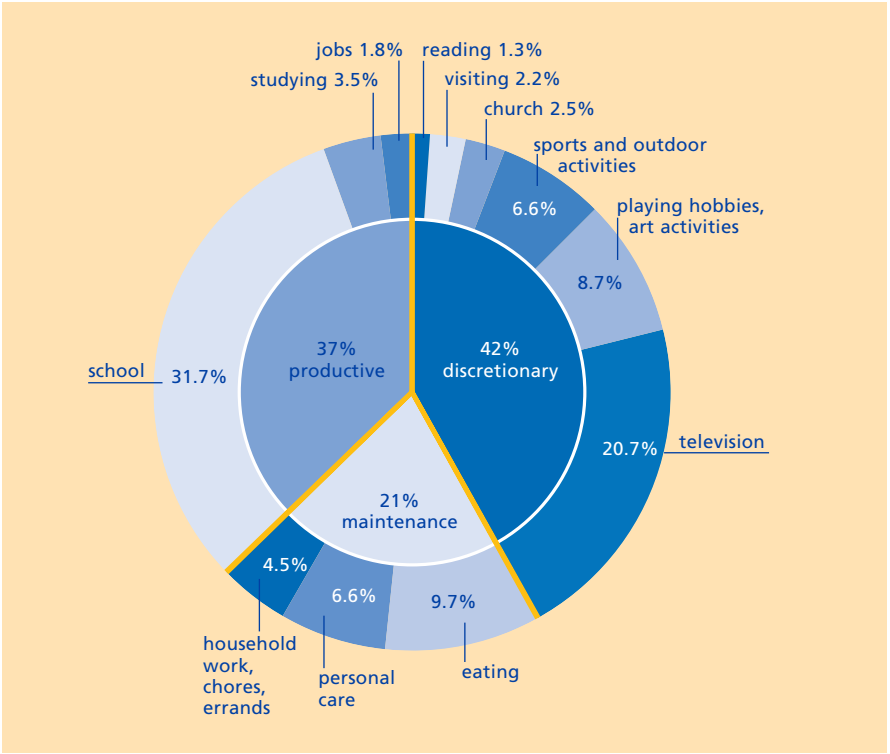
—Karen Pittman

ment approach called for examining how each program or setting could best contribute to creating an overall environment that offered young people the support they most needed. Practitioners and resource providers came to acknowledge that no single program or organization can provide everything that young people need[iv].

Community-based organizations have long provided young people with the kinds of supports and opportunities that foster resiliency and learning.

In 1993, the Carnegie Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs, which had been convened by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, published their report, "A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours." Drawing on the findings of the Task Forces' multi-year study of community based youth programs, the report focused public attention on the importance of the time young people spend out of school and the crucial role community based organizations play in young people's lives. ***This was the first national report to describe the critical developmental support community agencies provide for young people***. The report called upon policymakers to recognize the value of community based organizations' contributions, and provide these organizations with increased resources.

How Young Adolescents (aged 9–14) Spend Their Waking Hours



Source: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development

The Carnegie report pointed out that, each school day, young people decide how they will spend at least five of their waking hours. This is 40% of the total time they spend awake. During this time, young people might be learning a skill, practicing a sport, or performing community service. But, left alone, it is during these hours that young people are also most at risk for becoming involved in substance abuse or other risky behavior, and for perpetrating or being victims of crime and violence. And, with parents working longer hours and fewer schools offering extracurricular activities due to budget cuts, young people are being increasingly left on their own in the after-school hours, with "nowhere to go and nothing to do." The report described this time as representing both risk and opportunity for young people. Failure to use these hours to provide young people with interesting and challenging activities—through which they can learn, grow, and establish positive relationships with adults—means losing an important opportunity to help prepare them for healthy adult life.

Indeed community based organizations have long provided young people with the kinds of supports and opportunities that foster resiliency and learning. In the US, this history dates back to the late 1800s with the establishment of Settlement Houses, which provided comprehensive support for young people and served as community centers. Centuries later, as youth development principles began to permeate the thinking of policymakers, program leaders and others concerned about young people, community based organizations' long history of successfully working with young people began to be more widely recognized. Researchers began focusing more attention on documenting the contributions of community based youth organizations and examining how these community organizations supported young people. One example of this was the groundbreaking study which produced *Urban Sanctuaries*, (Milbrey McLaughlin, Merita Irby, and Juliet Langman) and examined the elements of successful community based programs serving young people from the inner city.

A Shift in Policy

By the mid-1990s, the youth development movement was increasingly influencing policy nationwide. Policymakers began breaking down the barriers of categorical funding and allocating resources to support collaborative efforts between community based organizations and other parts of the youth serving system. Federal public agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention began embracing the approach and shifted research and program dollars toward community supports for youth development. Even historically risk-focused federal efforts such as the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities responded to the compelling research on resilience and the pressure from practitioners to implement a more positive—and effective—approach.

At the state level, agencies such as the California Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services began shifting from strictly categorical funding to supporting broader based youth development efforts. Service reform initiatives, such as Healthy Start, sought to create a more integrated structure for youth services, bringing together a wide range of service providers to meet the needs of young people and their families in public schools.

THE SHIFT: From Deficit Focused Programming to the Youth Development Approach

Deficit	Youth Development
Problem fixing	Healthy development
Single program/single problem approach	Continuity across settings, community-wide strategies
Youth seen as service recipients	Youth are active participants
Rely on public institutions and systems outside young people's communities to treat or prevent young people's problems	Strengthen young people's natural support system (families, schools, neighborhoods)
Different interventions for at risk youth	Equity: the same positive supports and opportunities for all young people

Private funders increasingly recognized the value of taking a youth development approach. Public-private funding partnerships, such as California's Foundation Consortium, brought together California foundations with the Governor's Office and the California Department of Education to support youth and family focused policies and funding strategies. This kind of system-level change not only helped existing neighborhood youth organizations expand their support for young people, but also fostered the creation of numerous broad-based, collaborative youth development efforts in local communities across the country.

The Growth of School-Based After-School Programs

Amid this policy shift, public concern continued to grow about youth violence and other dangers. Added to these concerns—more recently—was growing public concern over perceived widespread academic underachievement. These twin concerns led to a surge of funding from federal, state and local sources for the development of school-based after-school programs. These programs can serve as safe places for young people to spend their after-school hours in supervised activities and also offer opportunities to enhance their learning.

At the federal level, in the fiscal year 2000, the U.S. Department of Education distributed over $450 million dollars to schools nationwide to improve academic achievement and strengthen community supports for young people through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. In FY 2001, Congress appropriated $846 million to expand the program. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program awards grants to public schools to enable them to create school-based "learning centers," which provide expanded educational and enrichment opportunities for young people, as well as other services for local community residents. All learning centers are required to work with community partners and faculty of the regular school program. By summer 2001, 21st Century programs will be operating in approximately 6,600 urban and rural schools, and will be serving about 1.2 million children and 400,000 adults.

The California Department of Education, through the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program, has awarded $87.8 million to fund nearly 1,000 school-based after-school programs across the state. Programs are designed to improve student performance in school and provide safe environments after-school for students in grades K-8. Recognizing the importance of collaboration between community organizations and

schools, the state requires that schools work with community partners and take a collaborative approach to funding these programs.

At the local level, public funds are increasingly being devoted to city-wide and community-wide after-school initiatives, such as the San Francisco Beacon Initiative, LA's BEST, and Sacramento's START. San Diego County alone is funding 344 school sites. Many cities have begun establishing protected funding pools, through taxes or other means, specifically designed to support youth development efforts. Cities and school districts are also beginning to see the growth of public-private partnerships designed to support young people's healthy development.

School-based after-school programs, such as those supported by new state and federal funds, offer an important route to supporting young people's learning and overall healthy development. Both the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and the California After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program are designed to provide young people not only with academic support, but also with opportunities for other kinds of enrichment, such as recreation, arts, and community service. In promoting this broad range of programming, policymakers recognize that young people learn in a variety of ways and through multiple activities. Both programs encourage the use of youth development practices in after-school settings and draw on strategies that have been used successfully by community-based organizations for years and that have proven to be effective. In addition, both programs acknowledge the importance of partnering with local community based organizations and recognize that these organizations can help link schools and communities in ways that benefit young people.

Youth development theory and practice can serve as a bridge between school and community-based efforts. Because youth development focuses on fundamental experiences that foster both learning and broader healthy development, this approach is well suited to address the twin goals of newly created school-based after-school programs. In the chapter that follows, we outline, from a youth development perspective, the kinds of experiences after-school programs can provide that will have the greatest impact on participants' lives. In doing so, we draw on the thinking of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, as well as the years of learning that community based organizations working with young people have to offer.

Notes

Creating After School Programs That Make a Difference

2

Providing young people with the experiences they need to succeed.

CHAPTER 2

After-School Programs With Impact

Drawing on our understanding of the fundamental ideas underlying the youth development approach described in Chapter One, we can now begin to look more closely at the kinds of experiences we can offer young people in after-school programs to help them learn and grow. Before we begin thinking specifically about how best to support the young people who participate in after-school programs, we need to have a vision of what we want all young people to learn and master by the time they reach early adulthood. In other words, we need to know where we want to go in order to know how best to get there.

Outcomes: What Do We Want For Young People?

A traditional deficit approach might define desired outcomes for young people in terms of the avoidance, or reduction of, specific problem behavior: for example, young people don't drop out of school, don't commit crimes, or refrain from abusing drugs. As described in the preceding chapter, the youth development approach sets positive outcomes, not only the avoidance of problems, as our goal for young people. From a youth development approach the overall goal is healthy development, but what does this mean? One way to define healthy development is in terms of ***what we want young people to be able to do*** as they enter early adulthood. These desired achievements are grouped in three broad categories:

- **Achieve economic self-sufficiency**
- **Maintain healthy family and social relationships**
- **Contribute to the community**

Early Adult Outcomes

What Do We Mean By Success?

These are some of the indicators of a successful transition to early adulthood, as summarized by the Community Action For Youth Project from the writings of youth development researchers and conversations with many youth workers:

Economic Self-Sufficiency means that all youth should expect as adults to be able to support themselves and their families, and to have some resources beyond basic survival needs. They should have decent jobs and the education or access to education to improve or change jobs.

Healthy Family and Social Relationships means that young people should grow up to be physically and mentally healthy, be supportive parents if they have children, and have positive family and friendship networks.

Contributing to Community can take many forms, but we hope that our young people will look to do more than be taxpayers and law-abiders—to contribute at a level where they give something back to their community, however they define their community.

In other words, we want young people to have decent jobs, good relationships, and play positive roles in their communities. These are the **early adult outcomes** we want for young people. This is not an exhaustive list; rather it is one attempt to broadly categorize what, at a minimum, we hope all young people will attain. It is clear that one after-school program cannot be responsible for young people achieving all these goals. But, knowing where we want to end up—the long term outcomes we ultimately want for young people—can help determine the path we take to get there and help us assess an after-school program's contributions along the way. With this in mind, it is important that—early on in the planning process—after-school partnerships pull together the diverse stakeholders involved and build consensus around the community's desired outcomes for young people.

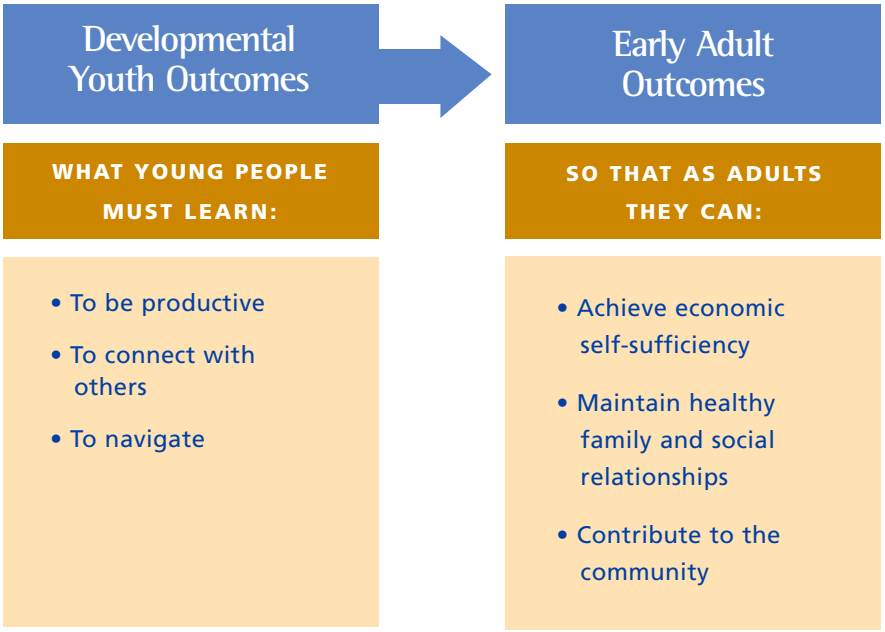
One way to understand how after-school programs can contribute to these long term outcomes for young people is to ***consider what young people need to learn at different ages and developmental states to improve their chances of achieving these long term outcomes.*** These are **developmental outcomes**—they measure young people's developmental progress toward meeting the challenges of adulthood.

Developmental Youth Outcomes

Young People Must Learn:

- **TO BE PRODUCTIVE:** to engage positively and do well in school, to use their spare time well and take care of their basic needs;
- **TO BE CONNECTED:** to form attachments and have supportive relationships with adults and peers, to identify with a larger community;
- **TO NAVIGATE:** through different settings, situations and challenges; this task encompasses learning how to move:
  - Among their multiple worlds —peer groups, families, schools, neighborhoods—each of which may require different behavior and even language; behaving in ways that are appropriate to the setting;
  - Around the pressure to engage in unhealthy and risky behaviors;
  - Through their own transitions—for example the transition from being taken care of to taking care of others.

Another way to think about these outcomes is as the intermediate milestones or markers that indicate that young people are on the path to successful early adult outcomes. These are obviously very broad categories, which encompass a wide range of accomplishment, but we can identify concrete indicators of young people's progress toward each of these developmental outcomes at any one point in time. Young people's progress toward accomplishing these outcomes can be measured at any stage of a young person's life. For a sixth grader, "learning to be productive" might mean doing his or her math homework. For an 18 year old, it might mean having a part-time job or doing regular volunteer work. These developmental outcomes are products of multiple experiences in many environments over time—in young people's homes, schools and communities.



The graphic above illustrates what young people must learn in order to achieve early adult outcomes.

What Can We Do in Our After-School Programs to Help Young People Succeed?

Now that we have an idea of the outcomes we want for young people, we can begin to examine more specifically how what we do in our after-school programs can contribute to young people reaching these outcomes. In other words, we can begin to answer the question:

> *What experiences can we provide for young people in after-school programs that will have the greatest positive impact on their lives and contribute to successful learning?*

As described in the previous chapter, resiliency research about young people's process of development offers important insights. From these research findings, as well as practitioners' knowledge in the field, we can create a fairly short list of the kinds of ***key experiences that young people need in all settings in order to develop into healthy adults***.

Key Experiences for Healthy Development

Young People Must Experience:

- **PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY:** so that young people feel secure and can take risks that help them grow;
- **MULTIPLE SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS:** where young people receive guidance from adults and emotional and practical support from both adults and peers, so that they learn to connect;
- **MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION:** through which young people experience real involvement and decision-making so that they are able to take on leadership roles and gain a sense of belonging;
- **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** where young people gain an understanding of the greater community so that they feel able to make an impact in and be a productive part of their community;
- **CHALLENGING AND ENGAGING LEARNING EXPERIENCES:** through which young people build a wide array of skills and competencies and experience a sense of growth and progress.

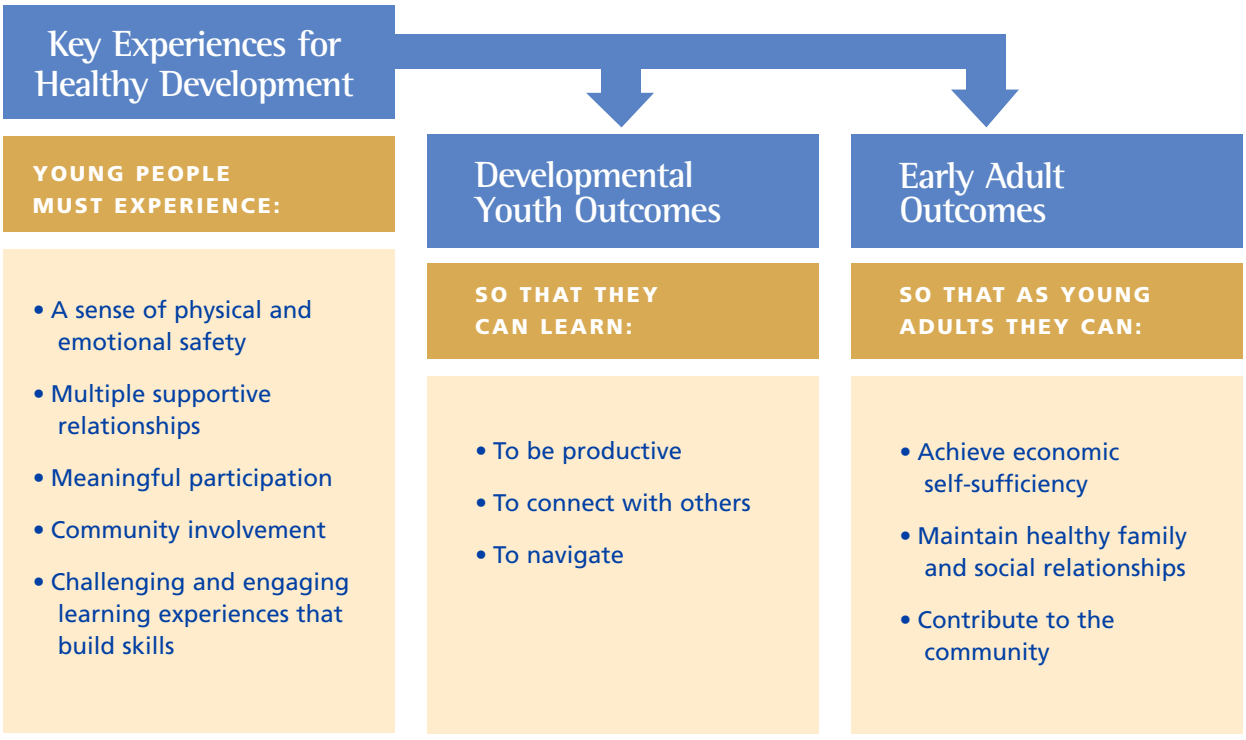
Adopting a youth development approach is an effective way to work with young people in any program area.

In fact, young people's need for these experiences is so strong that they will seek them out whether we provide them or not. As researcher Michelle Gambone points out:

> *All young people will form relationships, seek challenges, find groups to belong to, try out their wings as leaders, and find a way to feel safe, whether we intentionally provide this support for them or not*[i].

For young people who do not have access to positive supports and opportunities, we may see them seeking these experiences in troubling ways: looking for challenge in ways that put them at risk, belonging to gangs, or seeking safety through violence. Clearly, after-school programs can provide these supports and opportunities in positive ways. They can offer young people the chance to form strong relationships with adults and peers, and provide challenging learning experiences and a variety of opportunities for young people to "test their wings" in a safe setting.

These are the experiences that allow young people to learn and succeed. From a youth development perspective, providing these experiences for young people is critical—regardless of a program's specific content. In addition, meeting young people's basic needs for these experiences will help to ensure that they feel invested and engaged in your after-school program.



The graphic above identifies the kinds of experiences that support young people in meeting their developmental outcomes.

Organizational Practices That Help After-School Programs Support Young People

It is worth thinking about what programs need—at an organizational level—in order to succeed in providing young people with the kinds of experiences we have described. What can we, as program leaders and planners, do to design after-school programs to ensure that they offer participants the experiences described above? For example, how can we set up programs so that young people have the chance to really get to know adults and vice versa? How can we help ensure that programs offer a range of diverse activities which are interesting to young program participants?

As anyone who has struggled with too few resources or mismatched organizational priorities knows, the best staff in the world working with the deepest knowledge and understanding cannot create high quality experiences for young people without certain organizational supports in place. For example, in order for young people and adults working in the program to form close relationships, adult staff or volunteers must have sufficient time to spend with individual young people; this requires a ***reasonable youth to adult ratio*** in the program. To ensure that programs can adjust to meet participants' needs and can create new activities based on young people's interests, programs must have ***flexibility in allocating available resources***. For young people to feel secure and valued, programs must set ***high, clear and fair standards***.

Many teachers and youth workers have noted that the kinds of **organizational practices** described above work best when they are applied consistently at all levels of the agency or school. For example, the sponsoring school or agency must commit to holding high, clear, and fair standards for the staff, just as they do for the young participants. In this way, staff experience what they need to succeed, and the functioning of the organization at a macro-level mirrors the functioning at the program level—everyone "walks the talk."

Putting these organizational practices in place takes time, energy, and resources. In particular, program staff must have the time outside of their program duties to talk to each other, talk informally with young people, get to know the community, plan, evaluate, and learn. In Section Two, we describe these organizational practices in greater detail and highlight how they support high quality programming.

This graphic summarizes the relationship between organizational practices and key experiences that prepare young people for success in their adult lives.

The Continuum of Support: A Final Reminder

It is important for everyone to remember that after-school programs, no matter how effective, cannot provide everything that young people need for success. Just as policymakers have begun to recognize that schools cannot "do it all," so must we acknowledge that neither can after-school programs. after-school programs can make important contributions to young people's healthy development, but young people have the best chance for success when they experience the supports and opportunities we describe across many different settings: in their families, in schools, and in their communities. The entire community is responsible for preparing young people to succeed in early adulthood.

The entire community is responsible for preparing young people to succeed in early adulthood.

Notes

SECTION TWO

Youth Development Practices

Youth Development Practices

In this section, we describe the youth development practices that after-school programs can use to ensure that young people have the experiences that are critical to their successful learning and healthy development. As we described in Section One, research and years of experience in the field show that, for young people to learn and grow, they need to: feel emotionally and physically safe, experience multiple supportive relationships, participate in meaningful ways in activities, get involved in their communities, and gain skills through learning experiences that challenge and engage them. In the chapters that follow, we offer guidance on how after-school programs can create environments that offer young people these experiences. These chapters offer "hands-on" help about how to:

- **Promote a sense of safety for the young people in the program;**
- **Encourage relationship building;**
- **Foster meaningful youth participation;**
- **Provide opportunities for community involvement;**
- **Create challenging and engaging learning experiences that help participants build skills.**

Each chapter focuses on one of these five key practices. To illustrate, below we've outlined the sections included in the chapter on Relationship Building. Each chapter follows the same basic outline and is organized using the same section headings.

- **What Is "Encouraging Relationship Building"?**
  This section contains a working definition of the practice and actual program examples.

- **Why is Encouraging Relationship Building Important?**
  This section explains the importance of the practice, noting both how the practice will help promote young people's healthy development and learning over time, and how it will help program leaders and participants meet their more immediate program objectives.

- **How Do You Know if Your Program is Encouraging Relationship Building?** This section focuses on how to assess if the practice is being implemented in your after-school program. We include concrete examples of what you might see in the physical environment and what young people might say to indicate that they are benefiting from the practice.

Promoting a Sense of Safety

3

Ensuring that young people feel both physically and emotionally safe.

CHAPTER 3

What is Safety?

As caretakers, we generally think of safety in terms of the precautions we must take to ensure the physical safety of the young people under our care. This includes minimizing dangers within the surrounding environment, providing adequate adult supervision, and being well prepared to address emergencies, such as fires, earthquakes, and medical crises. There are established standards addressing these safety issues and excellent resources to guide program leaders in ensuring that program facilities are safe and that adults working with young people can ensure the physical safety of participants in case of emergencies.

(For guidelines and resources on physical safety, see the appendix at the end of this chapter, as well as the *Resources* section at the end of this guide.)

However, promoting a sense of safety in a program serving young people goes beyond creating a physically safe environment. A program can provide a safe physical environment and still be experienced by young participants as an unsafe place. For young people to experience a program as safe, they must feel personally safe—both physically and emotionally. The experience of **physical safety** means that young people feel safe from physical harm, confident that the surrounding adults will protect them from harm and assist them if they are feeling threatened—whether by their peers or by other adults. Further, young people know that there are rules that govern behavior and that these rules will be consistently and fairly enforced.

"In CBB they teach people not to make fun of you if you make a mistake, so now more people that were shy before and didn't want to work with people, they're more used to it, they'll be like, 'Yeah, I want to work in groups, come on let's work in a group."

—D.D., 12 years old, Community Bridges Beacon, San Francisco, CA

The experience of **emotional safety** means that young people feel secure that they will be valued and accepted by the group; that they can participate fully without fear of teasing, harassment, or ostracism; that racial and cultural differences between individuals are embraced. Individual differences, such as body type, or differences in ability or interests are also accepted and young people know that they will be treated with respect. In an environment that promotes emotional safety, young people feel safe to try and sometimes fail because positive risk-taking is supported and "mistakes are OK."

Safety means that young people feel both physically and emotionally safe.

Young people must:

- Feel secure that adults will protect them from harm.
- Know that they are protected by a set of fair and consistently applied rules.
- Feel secure that they will be valued and accepted by the group.

Why is Safety Important?

The research on child development and resiliency identifies the experience of physical and emotional safety as critical to supporting young people's healthy development. Young people must experience a sense of personal and emotional safety if they are to learn important life skills and competencies they will need in adulthood. Karen Pittman writes,

> *The experience of safety is basic and critical to young people. Its absence can have profound effects on their choices and decisions; [without a sense of safety] they can doubt the prospect of a future at all and develop the 'learned helplessness' often associated with victimization. When young people do feel safe, they are less likely to participate in the high-risk behaviors that can derail or delay healthy development*[i].

Programs that hold increasing or enhancing young people's learning as an important outcome should be particularly interested in promoting a strong sense of safety. Recent research into brain function reveals that the experience of safety is an important component in a person's readiness to learn. When people feel unsafe, their brain activity actually changes.[ii] Higher-level brain functions such as learning, cognition, and language ability are reduced or shut down as attention is diverted to a "fight-or-flight" response. Thus, feeling unsafe can actively interfere with learning and the integration of new information.

As *Tribes* authors note:

> *It is no wonder that Eric Jensen, author of Teaching with the Brain in Mind, states that excess stress and threat in the school environment may be the single greatest contributor to impaired academic learning. He also considers poor student relationships as a salient stressor. We need to provide our students with places of learning that the brain perceives as non-threatening iii.*

Because so much of the learning in after-school programs occurs in a social environment, a sense of safety is key. If we are expecting young people to take the positive risks needed to practice newly learned skills and take on leadership roles and responsibilities, we must provide them with a setting where they feel safe. Young people are more willing to take the risks necessary for learning and growth when they know that their "falls" will be cushioned by the acceptance of the group. A sense of safety is also a prerequisite for building the kinds of positive relationships with adults and peers that help young people learn (See Chapter 4, *Encouraging Relationship Building*).

Immediate Benefits

Establishing your after-school program as a safe place in the eyes of your participants brings numerous immediate benefits, both for program participants and for the adults managing the program. When programs are designed to promote a sense of safety, young people feel more secure and trusting of others. Promoting a sense of safety and acceptance serves to reduce "acting out" behaviors and underlying anxiety. When staff members make it clear that everyone is included in the emotional safety net, young people feel safe sharing their whole selves with the group. As they interact authentically and respectfully with others, they learn acceptance of difference and gain the ability to work and play with people from backgrounds different from their own.

"If something happens you can tell the security people or any adult and they will help you."

—5th grader, East Oakland Youth Development Center Oakland, CA

When all the young people in your program feel safe, they are more likely to tell adults what they are really thinking and feeling. As you gain a deeper understanding of their opinions and wants, you can better meet young people's needs. A feeling of safety among participants reduces conflicts among young people; and when conflicts do arise, they are resolved more readily. It also enables adults to reap the rewards of authentic relationships with young people.

How Do You Know if Your Program is Promoting a Sense of Safety?

What You See

You can tell that a program has placed importance on promoting a sense of safety among its participants when you walk into the room, even before the participants arrive, because the environment is clearly a place where all are included and respected:

- Program ground rules and schedules are printed in multiple languages when appropriate, so all young people and parents can read them.
- You might also see signs created by young people that reflect the values of the program, like "RESPECT YOURSELF; RESPECT OTHERS" and "MISTAKES ARE OK."
- If there are displays celebrating young people's accomplishments, every young person is represented at one time or another.
- The images on the walls represent the participants' racial and ethnic diversity, and present diverse role models (in terms of race, culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, family structure).
- Books on the shelves and other program materials are equally representative of the participants' diversity.

After the adults and young people arrive, you can see that staff have worked to promote a sense of safety in the way everyone interacts.

- As people enter it is clear that they know what to do and where to go and they demonstrate a shared understanding of the behavioral expectations.
- Young people of different backgrounds, ages, and genders , as well as adult staff members, interact comfortably with one another.
- Adults on staff represent the diversity of the young participants, and adult staff appear well informed about the cultural backgrounds of the young people in the program.
- Young people and adults speak respectfully to each other even when disagreeing.
- All young people make comments, ask questions, and share ideas without the fear of ridicule or censure; there are no hurtful "put downs."

"They [staff members] give you a chance to tell your story if something happened— If you give the first push, they're not gonna just punish you for starting it. They ask why [the fight started] to both people."

—J.C., 12 years old, Visitacion Valley Beacon Center, San Francisco, CA

- Each participant appears to have a positive role in the group.
- There is a consistent, predictable response when ground rules are broken or ignored.
- Conflicts are managed with words, and young people help each other or ask for adult help in managing conflict as necessary.
- Young people are not teased if they are unable to accomplish a task, but instead receive peer support and encouragement.

What Young People Say

Young people can tell you if they feel safe in the program. The most reliable way to assess for emotional safety is to ask the young people about their own experience of the program. Would young people in your program agree or disagree with these statements?

- I feel safe when I am here.
- If someone wanted to hurt me or beat me up here someone would stop him/her.
- Rules about how to treat each other here are enforced.
- It's okay for me to make mistakes here.
- There is at least one thing that I do well in this program.
- I learn things here about people who are different from me.

Reflection:

What are some things you see in your program that indicate young people experience safety when they are there? What are some things you would like to see?

SNAPSHOT

Gateway After-School Enrichment Program

Richmond, CA

Young people who don't follow the ground rules at Gateway may face a "jury of their peers." Program Director Verna Springer says, "We really follow our ground rules and take seriously our pledge that everyone has a right to feel safe in this environment." If a young person is violating others' rights and the usual consequences aren't effective, that young person may agree to face a jury of their peers. These young people are taking responsibility not just for creating the ground rules, but for making them meaningful.

Promoting a Sense of Safety in Your After-School Program

Making Safety a Priority

For young people to feel safe, they need to know that there is a set of clear rules that govern behavior, and that these rules will be applied consistently by adults who are committed to treating young people fairly. Make safety a priority by making sure everyone is familiar with everyday rules, procedures, and agreements about how staff should respond when young people break the rules. This includes all program staff, security, administration, janitorial staff, volunteers, and any other adults who might come in contact with young people in the program.

Plan how you will respectfully develop and review the rules with your young program participants and how you will secure their agreement. (The best way is to invite them to help in creating the rules. For help doing this, see *Tribes*, cited in the *Resources* section at the end of this guide.)

It is critical that young people in your program know where to turn if someone —whether a peer, staff member, or someone outside the program—is making them feel unsafe. Staff members need to take seriously any reports of bullying, teasing, abuse, harassment or other unsafe behavior and let the young person who feels unsafe know what steps will be taken to ensure his or her safety. It is important to raise this issue in group discussions from time to time by asking, "What would you do if a bully tried to bother you on your way here?" and "Who could you talk to if one of the staff members did something that you thought was unfair?"

Also begin to plan ways to ensure that a wide variety of young people can experience success in your program. One way to do this is to make sure that your program includes a wide range of activities that draw on different skills, knowledge bases, and abilities. It is also important to pay respectful attention to the individual participants, learning what motivates them and better understanding the context in which they have formed their beliefs.

While it is essential for program leaders to plan how best to promote safety, the policies, procedures and resources of the larger organization (whether a school, school district, or agency) must be in concert with the work of program staff members. There are certain structural features a program needs to have in place if it is going to consistently provide physical and emotional safety. Consider how to engage your organizational leaders in reviewing this chapter, especially the section on *Organizational Practices*.

SNAPSHOT

Girls, Inc.

Alameda County, CA

At Girls Inc. of Alameda County, California, girls feel safe because they are encouraged to be powerful. Staff members pay attention to details that send a big message, from posters on the walls of strong, accomplished women of diverse backgrounds, to staff members focusing compliments on what girls do, rather than on how they look.

Helping Young People Resist Bias

Creating emotional safety is about creating a climate that values diversity. The goal is for every child to feel comfortable with and accepted for who he or she is. Children are born loving, curious, and open to the world. They start to notice differences in gender, race, class, and family structure as early as age three, and they turn to the adults around them for clues about what those differences mean. In the absence of positive, affirming cues from their role models about difference, they learn what they can on the playground and from mass culture. Sadly, many of the messages they receive are full of subtle and not-so-subtle biases and stereotyping.

Bias is often subtle, and is communicated thoughtlessly if we are not careful. It is as much about what we don't say as what we do—tolerating loudness from boys but not from girls, making assumptions about a child's interests or skills based on his/her race, or posting images on the walls that leave some young people out. It is important for everyone at the school or agency to have a good understanding of bias and how it works if you are going to work to eliminate it in your program. A good first step is anti-bias training for all program staff.

Learning bias hurts young people, and they try to resist it—they want to remain open, loving, and kind. Help them by modeling acceptance and by addressing all types of slurs and stereotypes whenever they occur. Remember also to be mindful of the young person displaying the bias, striving to respect the context in which they developed their beliefs, while making it clear that behavior and words that hurt others are unacceptable. In an age-appropriate way, you can also help them learn how bias works and how to recognize it. (See *Hate Hurts*, cited in the *Resources* section, at the end of this guide.) An after-school program can provide a safe space by clearing the air of bias and stereotyping, and providing a strong message of inclusion. There are some excellent resources at the end of this guide to help you.

One of the most challenging, and frequently unacknowledged, issues that many adults face is helping young people deal with societal homophobia and heterosexism. The toll intolerance takes can be devastating: it is estimated that gay and lesbian adolescents account for one-third of teens committing suicide îv. Homophobic environments are especially hurtful to young people who sense that they might be "different" in some way or who have gay or lesbian family members. You can help create a sense of safety for all the young people in your program by using inclusive language and by recognizing and refusing to tolerate homophobic stereotypes and slurs. As one experienced youth worker put it, "challenging heterosexism creates safety not only for young people of these identities and others who are questioning their sexuality, but also for heterosexual young people being pressured to be violent to "prove" their identities.[v]

SNAPSHOT

Project Yield

Oakland, CA

Project Yield keeps an ongoing focus on safety with a Safety and Support Team comprised of parents and older youth who are graduates of the after-school program. "We are located in an area where there is a lot of gang activity, and where there are very strong neighborhood identities, so we made sure these various groups had balanced representation on the safety team, and we made sure we had accounted for turf issues," says Nancy Netherland, Director of Community Programming. Parents and young people are paid for their involvement in this important work.

Matrix for Achieving Equity in Classrooms

Use the following matrix of the six forms of bias to assess bias in instructional strategies, management styles, curriculum and communication in the classroom and the community. Included are indicators of bias and strategy for reducing bias in each component.

	Linguistic bias	Stereotyping	Invisibility/ Exclusion	Unreality	Imbalance/ Selectivity	Fragmentation/ Isolation
What to look for	Language which is dehumanizing or denies the existence of females or males; e.g. Japs, mankind	Members of a group portrayed in one role or with one characteristic.	The lack of representation of a group	Misinformation about a group, event or contribution.	Single interpretation of an issue, situation or condition.	Separating contributions of females and ethnic groups from the mainstream
Policy: What to do	Review policy for biased language.	Ensure non-discriminatory discipline policy	Recognize teaching performance which fosters equity.	Design proactive mission statement which corrects past bias.	Earmark money for equity classroom materials.	Design staff evaluations inclusive of equity criteria.
Instructional Strategies	Pluralize subjects to avoid a gender pronoun.	Encourage males and females to express a wide range of feelings, responses and sensibilities.	Encourage contributions from females and ethnic minorities.	Discuss controversial topics of discrimination and prejudice.	Engage students in analyzing and debating an issue.	Call on students equitably.
Current Curriculum	Set expectations for students to use non-sexist language.	Select readings that have the females and ethnic minorities in responsible, exciting leadership positions.	Count the numbers of male, female & ethnic group members to determine the proportion in relation to the population.	Engage students in conducting research to find if the information is accurate	Introduce alternative ways to solve problems and make decisions.	Stress that events are the result of collaborative efforts and contributions of many.
Management (School & Classroom)	Engage all members in noticing and correcting biased language	Intervene when slurs or jokes are made at another's expense.	Nurture cooperation among males, females and ethnically diverse students.	Facilitate shared decision making.	Create a supportive climate for differing perspectives to be discussed.	Establish ways of integrating groups during free time.
Family & Community Involvement	Attend council meeting and have students present on use of non-biased language in newspapers, on road signs, etc.	Invite non-traditional role models to teach a lesson on their area of specialization.	Provide students with shadowing opportunities	Examine the history of discrimination within local laws and history.	Establish community advisory groups that are balanced by sex, ethnicity and disability.	Solicit volunteers from diverse groups to work with students.

Permission to use granted by Jeanne Gibbs, author of *Tribes: A New Way of Learning and Being Together*, CenterSource Systems, Sausalito, CA.

Knowing and Involving Your Community

Every community has its own particular issues, history, and cultural heritage. It is important to know what groups are represented in your program, so you can be familiar with the history, issues, and relationships between those groups. This is important for inclusion, so you can be sure that your young people see familiar images on the walls, that they have some role models that come from a similar background, and that cultural celebrations reflect the group.

Knowing your community is also important for reasons of physical safety. For example, is your program located in gang territory? Do young people have to cross territory of rival gangs to get to your site? Do young people in your area sometimes carry weapons to feel safe? Are there current events in local or national news that may have an impact on how students get along at your program? What is the local history of relationships between different groups represented in your program?

Parents and community members are wonderful resources for identifying bias, providing insight into the historical and cultural background of the community, and creating solutions to a variety of problems. Some programs have formed parent "safety committees" that look at various safety issues and work together to find solutions. Be sure that such working groups contain a balance of the different groups represented in your program.

A Word About Confidentiality and Referrals

As you get to know young people in the program and they develop trust with you, many may share personal information, assuming it will be kept confidential. Older youth in particular may feel safer knowing that you can and will keep their conversations confidential. However, there are certain times when you will not be able to keep confidentiality—such as when a young person lets you know that someone is hurting them, or that they are going to hurt someone else.

It is important that adult staff understand the legal reporting responsibilities regarding child abuse and endangerment. If your program is addressing personal, sensitive issues with young people, it is important to have a clear policy on confidentiality that you can share openly with participants. It is particularly important with adolescents that they understand you will respect their privacy, and that there are limits in regards to ensuring their safety. (For more on confidentiality, see *Helping Teens Stop Violence*, listed in the *Resources* section at the end of this guide.)

There will be times when a young participant's issues are beyond the scope of your program practice. It is important that staff members receive guidance on how to handle these situations and have access to their program supervisors to discuss situations where referrals to other professionals may be in order.

SNAPSHOT

Community Bridges Beacon

San Francisco, CA

The Community Bridges Beacon, a school-based youth and community center, suggests the following training series for all Safety and Support teams.

Prior to opening or within the first three months, a one-day training including:

1. Youth development philosophy
2. Child and adolescent development
3. Safe school model
4. Team building

Within the first six months to one year:

1. Conflict mediation and resolution
2. Physical intervention
3. Dealing with hostile situations and personal safety
4. Anger diffusion techniques
5. Crisis response training
6. Incident and injury procedures and reporting

Annual trainings for all staff:

1. CPR/Standard First Aid
2. Child Protective Services reporting process and confidentiality
3. Diversity awareness/ Sensitivity
4. Sensitivity training for ageism
5. Sexual harassment
6. Gang recognition
7. Weapons recognition

Organizational Practices that Support Safety

Promoting a sense of safety begins with sound policies and practices of the organization that employs the staff who work with young people directly. These organizational practices require the commitment of everyone at the agency or school, from the administration to the janitorial staff to the volunteers. The following are organizational practices that are most directly related to safety.

Low Youth to Staff/Volunteer Ratio

A low youth to staff/volunteer ratio is necessary for both physical and emotional safety. Activities and spaces need to be adequately supervised and program leaders need to have an adult close so they can be available for situations that require one-to-one interactions. It is also important to have enough trained adults around to address issues of emotional safety when they arise and to form the kinds of trusting relationships that allow young people to feel truly safe.

Safe, Reliable, and Accessible Activities and Spaces

Safe, reliable, and accessible activities and spaces are crucial for young people to have a sense of safety. Are program spaces clean? Does the layout of the space and furniture allow adult staff to keep children in view? Are there places within the programming space for adult staff and young people to have one-to-one discussions? Has your organization worked to ensure that young people are safe when getting both to and from the program?

Continuity and Consistency of Care

Young people feel safest when they have ongoing, trusting relationships with the adults in their program and when there is a sense of routine. Continuity and consistency of care are crucial. Organizations must take steps to minimize staff turnover. Make sure there is a back-up plan when key staff members are absent. When staff members or volunteers leave the program, do all you can to make careful, smooth transitions, including giving young people a chance to say good-bye, when possible.

Ongoing, Results-Based Staff and Organizational Improvement Process

Both physical and emotional safety are complex topics that require a great deal of attention and planning. An ongoing, results-based staff and organizational improvement process is one way to be sure that safety issues don't fall through the cracks. It is also important to have a process for improvement that takes young people's input into account. Does your organization have a

"In one program, where many participants reported feeling unsafe, the issue turned out to be all about attitudes and understanding of difference. Discussions with young people and observations revealed that participants felt unsafe because they were unfamiliar with the culture of the other young people in the program. Once staff recognized that this was at the heart of young people's feelings of insecurity, they could take the necessary steps to address it, such as implementing an anti-bias training for staff and holding anti-bias workshops for young people."

—Stacey Daraio,
Community Network
for Youth Development
San Francisco, CA

process to assess the degree to which participants feel physically and emotionally safe in the program?

Community Engagement

Your community has a great stake in the safety of its young people, and a great deal of expertise and energy to help build a safe environment. As discussed throughout this chapter, strong community engagement is vital in creating a program that is inclusive of all young people and helps them feel safe.

Providing Opportunities For Safety At All Levels Of The Organization

Safety is most effective and meaningful when it is modeled at all levels of the school or agency. This means that all staff members, parents, and volunteers have the opportunity to feel physically and emotionally safe in the program. Adults who don't feel safe will have a hard time helping young people feel safe. This means addressing everything from physical safety on the grounds to making sure there is a way for program staff members to freely share their thoughts and concerns about the program, agency, or school. Fortunately, much of the learning that goes into making a safe program for young people will also make it safer for everyone.

Reflection:

Are there other ways your organization could support staff members in promoting a sense of safety in your program?

SNAPSHOT

Gateway After-School Enrichment Program

Richmond, CA

At Gateway, staff members pay attention to establishing safety for parents as well as students. "We understand that many of the parents did not have a positive experience in the school system," says Program Director Verna Springer. "To address this, we use take-home activities to engage the parents and ask them to fill out feedback forms on the activities. We make positive phone calls home, to tell them when their child has done well. Then when we invite them in, they come eagerly. We have lots of celebrations like family day picnics. They are so appreciative and thankful to have the chance to be a part of things and experience what their child is experiencing.

Five Things You Can Do NOW to Increase Safety

1. **Develop group agreements or rules regarding safety and regular group meetings to ensure that everyone feels physically and emotionally safe.**

   Conduct a meeting with the program participants early on to express the commitment that in your program "every person has the right to feel safe, included, and accepted." Ask participants to define what these terms mean to them, and what agreements and rules they want to make to ensure the right of safety. Decide together what happens when the safety agreements are broken. Train young people in a process to resolve differences and decide at what point an adult should be asked to intervene.

2. **Institute a regular group or "community" check-in meeting.**

   If issues of safety and relationship building are important, set aside a regular time for the group to reflect on their experience in the program and to suggest ways in which the peer group can work together even better. "Every year in the first week of school, I gather my students in our book corner, which is a cozy spot covered with a nice thick rug. We sit in a circle so that we can see each other's faces, and I tell the children that every week we will meet as a group to discuss how well we are getting along, what is working and what's not working, and how to solve our problems" writes Mona Halaby, author of *Belonging: Creating Community in the Classroom*. Make room in the meeting for people to share appreciations for their peers who are contributing to making the program a positive, safe place. The *Tribes* book (Jeanne Gibbs) and Tribes trainings are also excellent resources for how to conduct community-building meetings with young people.

3. **Include "no put-downs" in your group rules.**

   When developing group agreements or rules with young people, a request for a "no put- down" rule will usually surface early in the discussion. It is important to discuss with the young people how everyone will support its enforcement. This takes real commitment, as many young people have learned to use "put-downs" as a defense against being hurt themselves. Adult staff members will have to follow through with great consistency, offering reminders that ask members to hold to this agreement, especially in the beginning. Take every slur you hear seriously, even if it is in a teasing tone or participants claim it is okay. It is not okay because slurs hurt. It is helpful to hold group discussions or activities around "put-downs",

"When agencies ask young people about their experiences in programs, they discover invaluable new information which would otherwise remain invisible to adults. For example, one agency surveyed their participants and was surprised to learn that many of them did not feel safe at the program. Further discussion revealed that participants felt unsafe because, unknown to adult staff, young people had recently brought weapons onto the site. Without asking young people about their experiences, staff would not have been able to address this key issue."

—Stacey Daraio,
Community Network
for Youth Development
San Francisco, CA

why they hurt, and what we can do instead. As young people come to trust that you will enforce this policy, you will see a reduction in the number of "put-downs", and the sense of safety in the program will grow. Learning the benefits of interacting without this kind of hurtful behavior at an early age teaches young people a profound lesson in the value of tolerance and mutual respect.

4. Assess the cultural, gender, ethnic, and family structure background of your group.

Without asking unnecessarily probing questions, do what you can to learn who is in your program. Do the staff members and volunteers reflect these backgrounds? Do images and books in the classroom? Program activities and celebrations? Are there differences in who comes to program, who participates in which activities, which parents feel welcome at events?

5. Expand the group's knowledge of particular groups and cultures.

Start by educating yourself. Avoid tokenizing young people or others in your program or school by asking them to explain their culture. Instead, go to the library, look on the internet, attend local cultural events, and call or visit organizations promoting equity for the group you are researching. Learn what you can about the history, art, literature, music, food, celebrations, and struggles of a culture or group. Then help the young people in your program study different cultures and celebrate the contributions of different groups. You might learn about women, people of color, and gay people who have contributed to your neighborhood. Celebrate various holidays as they are celebrated in different countries. Celebrate Black History Month, Women's History Month, Gay Pride Month, or Cesar Chavez's Birthday. Young people can present what they've learned, and adults may be willing to share food, decorations, or music. Don't make assumptions about what any particular person might share. Be sure that these celebrations are part of an ongoing process of inclusion and education, and that some groups aren't just segregated to certain "diversity days."

Notes

CHAPTER 3

Sharing With Others: Presentation Materials and Exercises

The following are some tools for sharing with your staff or others at your agency or school to get everyone thinking about safety. You might want to start by reading the section at the beginning of this chapter together and/or handing out some of the case studies highlighted in the chapter. The following Personal Reflection Exercise is a good way to spark discussion. If there is a local youth serving agency with particularly strong expertise in promoting a sense of safety among their young participants, you may want to invite someone from that agency in as a guest speaker to offer inspiration and share experience.

EXERCISE:

Personal Reflection: Safety

This exercise is intended to help people in your program identify the factors that make an environment feel emotionally safe. It is a good opening to focus the group on the importance of safety.

Begin by telling participants that you are going to do a personal reflection. Ask them to close their eyes, and spend a few minutes thinking about their own experience. Then read the following:

Imagine a time when you were with a group of people and you felt that you didn't fit in.

- Where were you? Who were you with? Were you familiar with the habits and style of the group? Did you share interests and values?

- How did you feel in that situation?

- Where was your attention focused?

- How did you respond?

Now think of a time when you were with a group of people with whom you felt completely at home—where you could let your hair down and be truly yourself.

- Where were you? Who were you with? Were you familiar with the habits and style of the group? Did you share interests and values?

- How did you feel in that situation?

- Where was your attention focused?

- How did you respond?

Personal Reflection: Safety continued

Group Discussion:

Before holding a group discussion you might want to give the participants an opportunity to write down some highlights of what they learned in the Personal Reflection Exercise. Then hold a discussion using the following questions to facilitate sharing and learning from each participant's experience.

- What were some differences in your relationships with the two groups?

- How did you think differently in the group you were comfortable with vs. the one where you were uncomfortable? How did you act differently?

- In what ways did you feel safe or unsafe in the two groups?

- What are the qualities of an emotionally safe environment?

- How could a young person's feelings of being safe or unsafe affect their ability to learn?

Use this chart to examine inclusion and representation in your program. Record the percentages of every group represented at various levels of the program. You can add groups as needed to fit the demographics of your community. You can also use a modified version to look at representation in program materials and images on the walls. This is a tool for beginning a discussion and identifying areas for action—you can modify it and use it in the way that makes the most sense for your program.

Inclusion Chart

PERCENT IN PROGRAM	YOUNG PEOPLE	PROGRAM LEADERS	PROGRAM ASST.	PARENTS	CONTRACT STAFF	VOLUNTEERS	MANAGEMENT
AFRICAN-AMERICAN							
ASIAN/ PACIFIC ISLANDER							
LATINO/A							
NATIVE AMERICAN							
MIDDLE-EASTERN							
MULTI-RACIAL							
WHITE							
MALE							
FEMALE							
LESBIAN/ GAY/ BISEXUAL/ TRANSGENDERED							

EXERCISE:

Conflict Intervention

This exercise will help staff members think ahead about how they might intervene in a conflict or interrupt bias.

Divide into teams of five or six. Each team has five minutes to plan a role play in which they are young people from the program involved in a situation that requires staff intervention. The situations can be arguments, fights, teasing, slurs, or any similar situation that might occur among your program's young people. Do each role play, one at a time, with the staff member played by someone from outside the small group. After each role play, hold a large group discussion to consider these questions:

- What did the staff member do that was helpful in the situation?
- How did the staff member feel before the intervention? During? After?
- How did the "young people" feel before the intervention? During? After?
- What else could the staff member have done to help each of the "young people" feel safer in the program?
- Was this situation realistic for your program?
- Is further staff training or discussion necessary?

Further Staff Training Topics for Safety

- Resisting bias
- Specific workshops on racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, and other topics as needed
- Active listening
- Conflict mediation and de-escalation
- First Aid
- Earthquake preparedness
- Child abuse reporting requirements

Safety: Checklist for Action

This checklist will help you stay focused and organized as you begin making safety a priority in your program.

Have you:

- ☐ Assessed your program's organizational practices to see if they promote safety?
- ☐ Looked at how your school or agency allocates resources (time, space, and money) to promote a sense of safety for participants?
- ☐ Assessed the need for staff development and planned for training?
- ☐ Defined specifically how you expect safety-promoting activities to positively impact young people?
- ☐ Set aside ongoing staff time to thoroughly prepare for and implement inclusion strategies?
- ☐ Assessed the cultural and family backgrounds represented in your program?
- ☐ Educated staff about different groups represented in your program?
- ☐ Educated all program staff about bias?
- ☐ Educated volunteers about bias?
- ☐ Instituted a "no put-down" rule?
- ☐ Taken time to have young people really explain what they are thinking when they break program rules?
- ☐ Assessed program materials for inclusion?
- ☐ Involved parents and community members in planning to promote and ensure safety?
- ☐ Incorporated outcomes related to promoting safety into program evaluation?

- **Encouraging Relationship Building in Your after-school Program**. Here we offer concrete strategies for promoting the practice in your program.

- **Organizational Practices That Support Relationship Building.** This section offers an overview of the resources and practices at the organizational level, which must be in place in order for program leaders to work effectively with young people in their programs.

- **Five Things You Can Do Now to Encourage Relationship Building.** This is a list of five program ideas that you can implement right away to begin prioritizing the particular practice.

- **Sharing With Others: Presentation Materials and Exercises.** These are sample materials and exercises for promoting discussion about each key youth development practice.

We have also included a *Resources* Section, which lists other training and technical assistance resources for program leaders and others. Resources on each of the five key practices are included, as well as more general sources of information on youth development.

As noted earlier, the youth development approach is not meant to be prescriptive—it does not dictate a specific program design. On the contrary, the practices described in this section can be incorporated into all after-school programs, regardless of their structure or program content. Effectively implementing these practices in your after-school program will foster learning, stimulate young people's engagement in the program, and help your program have the maximum positive impact on young people's lives.

Encouraging Relationship Building

4

Fostering caring and supportive relationships in your program.

CHAPTER 4

What is Relationship Building?

Relationship building is the development of caring, supportive relationships between adults and young people, and among young people and their peers. We know relationship building is happening and young people feel supported when they report that they feel "known" and accepted by others in the program, when they experience the program as a place where they receive emotional and practical encouragement and support, and when they can turn to adults for personal guidance and assistance. What does relationship building look like in an effective after-school program? Staff members spend time with young people, getting to know them and developing trust.

Adults respect young people and treat them with courtesy and care. Young people learn to treat each other with respect as well, and develop a group identity that includes all members. Staff members know that building positive, trusting relationships with young people is not a separate part of the work, but rather an integral part of every activity and interaction. (See *How Do You Know if Your Program is Encouraging Relationship Building?*.)

Relationship building means that young people:

- Experience emotional and practical support from adults and peers.
- Experience guidance from adults.
- Build knowledge of adults and peers.

Why is Relationship Building Important?

"I like it that there are people here who care about you and listen."

—L.V., age 10, Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center, San Francisco, CA

There is overwhelming evidence that the presence of caring, supportive relationships between young people and adults is one of the most critical factors in the healthy development of young people. In research on childhood resiliency, the presence of these relationships is the leading indicator that young people will be healthy and productive adults, regardless of their economic circumstances and other risk factors. By providing opportunities for relationship building, we ensure that our after-school programs are contributing to the important developmental needs of the young people we serve. It is important to note that relationship building is also a critical factor in whether or not young people experience a sense of physical and emotional safety in their after-school program, as discussed in Chapter 3, *Promoting A Sense of Safety*.

Can after-school programs really make a difference? When adults are asked to reflect on the experiences that were most influential in their childhood and adolescence, they almost always cite an important relationship with a caring adult who took the time to know them, and offered guidance and encouragement. This person was often an individual outside of the home and classroom: a coach or youth worker who took a special interest, a teacher who took time after-school. (See the "Cookie Lady" exercise in the section *Sharing with Others: Presentation Materials and Exercises*).

Immediate Benefits

The first challenge in running successful after-school programs is attracting and retaining participants. This is especially challenging with adolescents who can "vote with their feet" if they do not have a positive experience in the program. When young people feel respected and have caring relationships with adults and peers in an after-school program, they feel more included and invested in the program. As they develop a sense of group membership, they are more likely to attend regularly and participate more fully in the program.

When young people are engaged in deciding how they want to be treated, they have the chance to reflect on their own behavior and how it impacts others. They become more aware of the needs and feelings of others, and more accepting of difference. Working together to build relationships in a structured environment also gives young people the chance to learn and practice their communication skills.

"I've learned a lot about myself and how to interact with people and how to improve this. I've learned a lot about communicating."

—L.M., 14 years old, Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center, San Francisco, CA

Most importantly, creating opportunities for relationship building ensures that young people will have somewhere to turn when they need help or are faced with difficult decisions. Relationship building is cited as a critical factor in the effectiveness of prevention programs designed to reduce high-risk behaviors. Supportive relationships with both adults and peers are sources of emotional support, guidance and instrumental help that can contribute to better decision-making, lower levels of stress, higher academic achievement, healthier relationships and lower levels of drug and alcohol use.[i]

Many after-school programs offer extended learning opportunities for young people with the hope of improving academic skills, which can lead to improved school performance. The experience of emotional safety and supportive relationships are major factors in creating successful learning environments. Recent research on learning reveals that most learning happens in a social context. These experiences serve as turnkeys in young peoples' willingness to take positive risks, such as accepting help and feedback from others and openly risking failure in order to learn new skills.

As the experience of mutual respect and trust increases between program leaders and young participants, discipline problems diminish. It becomes easier to get young people to voice their ideas and opinions, and easier to facilitate group activities. Program assessment becomes more meaningful as young people are empowered to respond honestly. In addition, when staff members have the time and organizational support necessary to develop relationships with young people, their job satisfaction increases.

How Do You Know if Your Program is Encouraging Relationship Building?

What You See

You can tell that a program encourages relationship building when you walk into the program room and see:

- Ground rules or guideline posters citing how young people want to be treated and will treat others are prominently displayed. These displays are clearly hand made by the program participants and sometimes in different languages.
- Pictures on the walls celebrating program participants, their cultures, and the group's accomplishments within the program.
- A schedule of the week's activities including structured time for one-to-one contact between adults and young people, for group discussions, and open time for young people to socialize with one another and have informal contact with adult staff.

After the adults and young people arrive, you can see that your program encourages relationship building by the way they engage with each other:

- Young people and adults are treating others respectfully.
- Adults squat down when interacting with small children, to speak to them at their eye level.
- Young people are reminding each other of the ground rules.
- Conflicts are resolved with words, not raised voices or fists. If needed, adults are asked to assist with the situation.
- Young people are able to work together in groups and across differences of age, gender, ethnic background, ability, and social status.
- Young people approach adults to discuss problems they may have.
- There is a time in the day to reflect on the group's accomplishments and interactions.
- Adults are available before and after the program, for informal conversation with participants.

What Young People Say

The most reliable way to judge if your program is encouraging relationship building is to ask the young people about their own experiences of the program. If asked, would young people in your program agree or disagree with these statements?

- People here say something nice to me when I do something good.
- There are rules here for how people are supposed to treat each other.
- Rules about how to treat each other are enforced by adults and participants.
- I get chances here to learn about young people who are different from me.
- I feel respected by staff here.
- I feel respected by other kids here.
- People here pay attention to what is going on in my life.
- There is someone here I could talk to if I was upset or mad about something.
- Someone here would say something to me if something in my life weren't going right.
- There is someone here who I could go to for help in a crisis, or if I needed to talk about personal problems.

Reflection:

What are some things you see in your program that encourage relationship building? What things would you like to see?

SNAPSHOT

Project Yield

Oakland, CA

At Project Yield program staff members are paid to spend up to eight hours per week helping young people with problems outside the program, getting to know them in their neighborhood, or just hanging out and chatting with young people. Staff members are also evaluated partly on the basis of the strengths of the relationships they build with young people. One way the program gathers information on relationship building is by asking young people, through surveys, to identify staff members with whom they've established a significant relationship. This, along with other indicators of relationship building, is factored into staff evaluations.

Encouraging Relationship Building in Your After-School Program

Making Relationship Building a Priority

Many individual educators and youth workers know intuitively that building strong, positive relationships is one of the most important things they do. But, is there value placed on this at the program and organizational level? Are program leaders and staff aware of its importance in supporting young people's learning and greater development? Is relationship building an explicit program objective? Is it reflected in the design, implementation or evaluation of the after-school program?

Allocate time in a program staff meeting to consider these questions. If staff members agree that relationship building is important, consider how the program's structure and practices currently support it. For example, does the daily schedule of activities allow for opportunities for relationships to develop? Is there time for participants and adults to get to know one another? Is there time for small group discussions and for young people to have one-to-one contact with adults? How can you assess your success in achieving this important objective and how are staff evaluated on their contributions to encouraging relationship building? (For more information see the section *Organizational Practices that Support Relationship Building.*)

Establishing Group Agreements

As noted in Chapter 3, *Promoting a Sense of Safety*, creating group ground rules or guidelines for how people in the program will treat one another is an important first step in encouraging relationship building in an after-school program. Brainstorm ground rules as a group, and be sure everyone in the group feels that the rules are fair. Try to be specific, and discuss what various rules mean. For example, "respect each other" is often offered as a ground rule, but what does "respect" mean to the young people in your program? Does it mean no "put-downs"? Something else?

Ask young people to consider whose job it is to remind group members when ground rules are broken, and how to do this in a genuine and respectful way. If appropriate, young people can suggest possible consequences. This process gets them thinking about how they want to treat each other, lets them know ahead of time what the expectations are, and gives them ownership over program guidelines.

Once ground rules are established, post them prominently and refer to them often. Having young people themselves make a ground rules poster will get them more involved. It is crucial that all adults in the program enforce ground rules consistently. (See *Tribes TLC®*, cited in the *Resources* section at the end of this guide for more information on setting ground rules.)

Getting to Know Each Other as Individuals

If the only way for young people to get individual attention is for them to act out, they will do it! Try to give them opportunities to interact with adults one-on-one in positive ways. Find out what they like to do, who the important people in their lives are, and what they dream for the future. Group members also need time to get to know one another—allow some unstructured time for social interaction.

Being Genuine

Young people respond very positively to honesty and sincerity. Younger children are excited when they have a glimpse of the real person behind the adult leader role. Young people want to get to know you, and love hearing about your childhood experiences once in a while. Let them know a little bit about your likes and dislikes, funny habits, or hopes for the future. For adolescents, when adults are honest and sincere, it communicates that adults value and respect them. Allow time for real relationships to develop—don't try for instant connections.

Offering Praise

Everyone appreciates praise. Try to say five words of praise for every word of correction. Don't just save your praise for big accomplishments, but notice all the steps along the way, saying things like "Keesha, you're working so hard on that painting!" and "Look, the Red Team got all their equipment on so quickly. Now we're ready to play!" When you praise, make sure your words are true and you are praising a real accomplishment (although it may be a small one). For young children, praise is also an alternative way to refocus negative behavior without scolding and singling out individuals: instead of "Sit *down* Robert!" try "Almost everyone is sitting quietly in the circle. Soon we can begin."

Understanding the Pace of Group Relationship Building

Trusting relationships between individuals and within groups take time to develop. This can be supported through the use of activities designed to strengthen relationship building. When deciding on group building activities, make sure that personal revelations and group activities are low risk. Especially with adolescents, it is important to let trust develop before you ask them to do anything that may make them feel "silly" or vulnerable. *Tribes TLC®* has described a process of group evolution that takes place in three stages: Inclusion, Influence, and Community (for more information, see the *Resources* section at the end of this guide).

SNAPSHOT

East Oakland Youth Development Center

Oakland, CA

At the end of every African dance class practice at East Oakland Youth Development Center, the instructor holds a closing circle. Her voice booms across the gym, "Okay, let's close out." The young people know exactly what to do. The young girls practicing on the periphery of the dance class, the drummers, the young people observing from the bleachers, and the dancers join in a large circle holding hands. Everyone is invited. She reminds them that they are "always in the company" and then continues with a series of "appreciations" of the young people and others to whom they should be thankful. They drop hands, turn from the circle, and disperse to collect their belongings and head home.

Tribes TLC® has described a process of group evolution that takes place in three stages: Inclusion, Influence, and Community.

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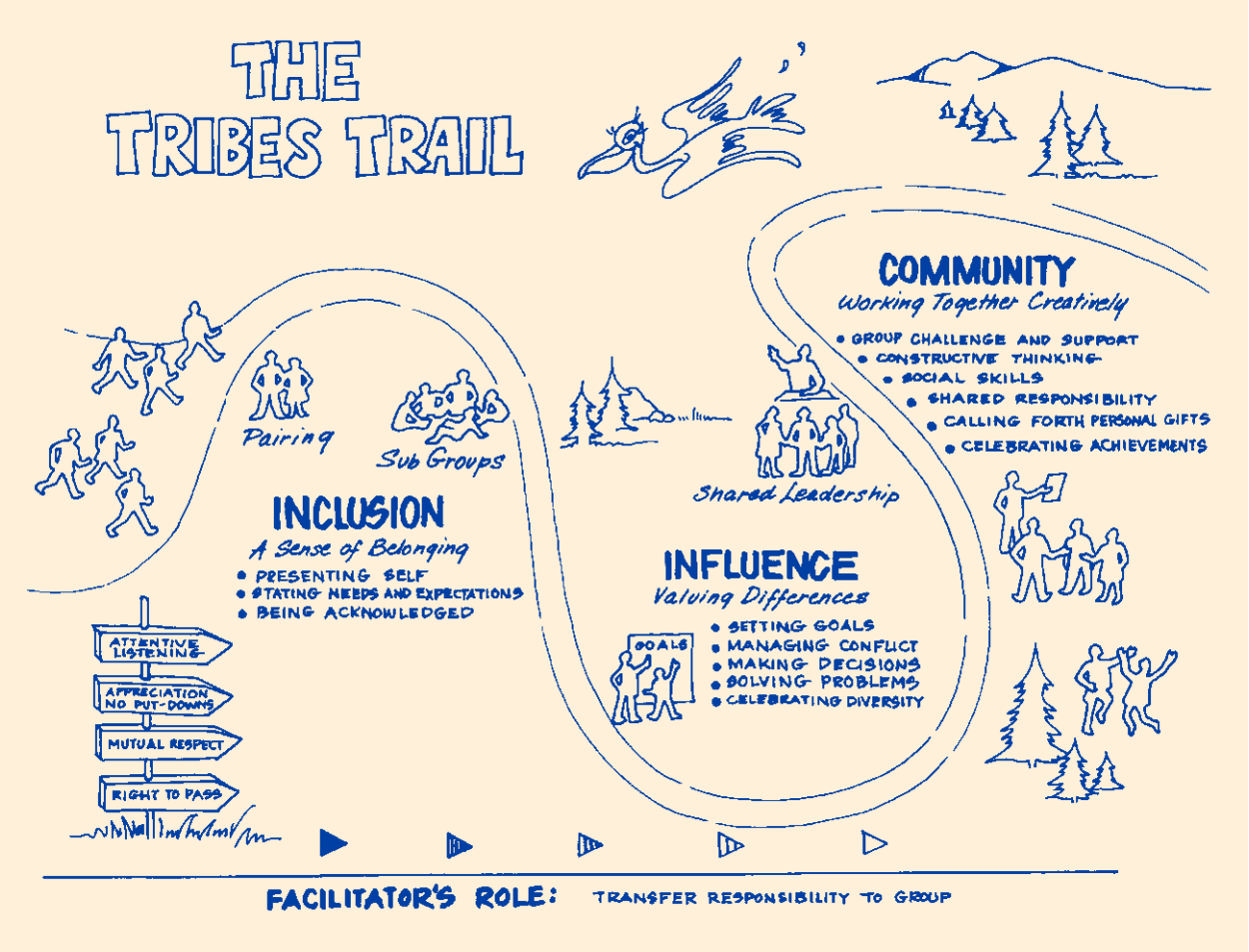


Including Rituals for Recognition and Reflection

Young people respond positively to knowing there will be an early opportunity to "voice" their arrival and presence, especially as they make the transition from one peer setting to another, from the school day to an after-school setting. This means that individuals do not have to find negative ways to be acknowledged.

Beginning the program with small group circles for "check-in" is a great way to give young people opportunities for voice, recognition and reflection. Just by taking a few minutes to let young people talk about their day or how they are feeling, you can create a calm transition into the day, get a feel for the group, and give each person a chance to feel important and included. Many groups also like to have a check-out at the end of the day to say good-bye and take an opportunity to reflect on how the group worked together that day. Once these rituals are established, carrying them out can be turned over to the young people. (For more information see *Tribes TLC®*, listed in the *Resources* section at the end of this guide).

Knowing Your Limits

It is respectful to set appropriate boundaries with young people to let them know what you can and can't do as a staff member of your school or agency. It is also important to recognize when a young person comes to you with a problem that requires professional help. Staff members need to be prepared with a list of resources so they will know what to do when a young person is facing a crisis. This way, when young people reach out for help, they will be met with support and encouragement, rather than being pushed away by an adult who is frightened or unsure.

Organizational Practices that Support Relationship Building

When adult program leaders commit to encouraging relationship building, they quickly become aware of organizational structures or practices that are necessary to support their work and the practices or structures that are currently working against their efforts. Below are some organizational practices that have been identified as important to supporting effective youth development practices and that relate directly to relationship building.

Low Youth to Staff/Volunteer Ratio

It is crucial to have enough adults in the room to encourage relationship building. How many is enough depends on your young people and your program, but there is a limit to how many relationships one staff member can sustain while facilitating program activities and ensuring respectful behavior among program participants. Plan ahead for situations where a young person needs immediate one-on-one attention.

Safe, Reliable, and Accessible Activities and Spaces

After-school programs are often relegated to unused and uncared-for spaces that are poorly outfitted and inappropriate for working with young people. Opportunities for relationship building can be greatly affected by the nature of a program's physical space. What is the nature of your space? Is it dependable and reliable each day? Does it communicate respect for program participants and program staff? Is there a comfortable place for program participants to participate in meetings? Is it quiet enough, free enough from interruptions and distractions, for young people to express themselves, feel heard and listened to? Does the space allow for small groups of young people to work on projects, and for adults and young people to talk quietly one-to-one if needed?

Continuity and Consistency of Care

Young people, especially adolescents, need to trust that staff members will be there for them before they can allow relationships to develop. On a day-to-day basis it is important to have a backup plan and sufficient staff to keep the program open in case of illness or other staff absence. The turnover among adult staff can be deeply felt by young people who invest themselves in relationships with adult program leaders. Organizational leaders and program staff should consider how to implement practices and policies that support the recruitment and retention of qualified staff and volunteers.

High, Clear, and Fair Standards

Young people need to know what is expected in terms of their behavior toward themselves and others. When adults hold high expectations in terms of young people's behavior and abilities, the young people feel respected and valued. Standards for young people's behavior should be clearly and regularly communicated along with clear, consistent consequences for violations. Standards are more likely to be perceived as fair if young people have input in creating them, if they are evenly applied to all young people and staff, and if there are grievance procedures for young people who feel unfairly treated.

Clear and fair also means that the adults in and around the programs know and support the program standards and expectations. In an after-school program, adults in and around the program include classroom teachers, administrators, and janitors who do not participate in the program directly, but who have contact with program participants in the building. Supporting program expectations means holding young people accountable for their behavior and doing it in a way that models the value of respecting others. It is also important to note that expectations around how adults treat young people are sometimes different in an after-school program than during the school day.

Ongoing, Results-based Staff and Organizational Improvement Process

Relationship building requires detailed attention to individual and interpersonal dynamics. Staff members need to have time to communicate with each other and with supervisors about what is going on with various young people. Staff members also need training in a range of skills to effectively build relationships. These skills include communication, positive discipline, facilitation, conflict resolution, and active listening. It is also important to have a process for organizational improvement that takes young people's input into account.

Providing Opportunities for Relationship Building at all Levels of the Organization

Efforts to encourage relationship building are most effective and meaningful when they are modeled at all levels of the agency or school. This means that all staff members, parents, and volunteers have opportunities to get to know each other, to receive emotional and practical support, and to receive guidance from more experienced people when necessary. Working with young people in an after-school program, like parenting, is emotionally draining, and program leaders and volunteers need support from their peers. Staff members who feel isolated in a program or agency will quickly burn out and leave. Many organizations provide opportunities for staff to build supportive relationships through staff and organization-wide social events, regular staff meetings, and group and individual check-ins. Other ways to support staff in building relationships include holding regular supportive supervision meetings, structuring work so that it is done in teams, and sending staff members to outside trainings where they can connect with their professional colleagues.

Reflection:

Are there other ways your organization could support staff members in encouraging relationship building?

Five Things You Can Do NOW to Encourage Relationship Building

1. **Make sure that each young person has one adult who knows him or her well.**

   An ongoing part of encouraging relationship building is making sure that everyone is connected in some way. Young people need to have a positive relationship with an adult if they are to get the most out of the program. At a staff meeting, go over your attendance list. Is there someone on staff or a volunteer who is connected with each young person? If there are some program participants who have "slipped through the cracks," decide who will make a special effort to get to know these young people. It's a good goal to be sure that each young person has one-to-one time each week with an adult.

2. **Institute a check-in circle.**

   A check-in circle doesn't need to take very long and can greatly benefit both young people and program staff. In small groups (20 or fewer), begin the day by sitting quietly in a circle and letting each person speak briefly. Sometimes it helps to have a special item to pass around the group like a talking stick that identifies the one who has the "rapt attention" of the group. When you first start instituting the check-in circle, it helps to plan a safe and interesting check-in question, such as, "What is your favorite thing to do at recess?" or "If you could go anywhere in the world for one day, where would you go?" Later on, after some practice, you might have each person share one thing about their day or say how the group is working together. (See *Tribes TLC®,* which is cited in the *Resources* section at the end of this guide.)

3. **Develop ground rules with young people.**

   Have the group brainstorm a list of ground rules for how you will treat each other in the program. Ask them to explain why each rule might be important. Narrow the list down no more than seven items, so that the rules can be easily remembered. (One way to do this is to give each person three stickers. Ask them to vote by placing their stickers next to the rules they think are most important.) Ask the group if they all feel they can agree to try to live by these ground rules. Promise that you will help them remember and let them know that they can remind each other as well. (See *Conflict Resolution* in the *Resources* section at the end of this guide.)

4. Hold a conflict resolution training for young people.

When young people have the skills to resolve conflict in healthy and respectful ways, they are kinder and happier, and require less adult intervention. They also feel safer in the after-school program knowing that they can solve problems together and that they can get help if they need it. You can also train "conflict managers" to help peers or younger children resolve conflict. (See the guide' s *Resources* section).

5. Participate in a Tribes TLC® training or another training in group process and collaborative learning.

Building high quality, positive relationships in your program takes careful planning and attention. Supporting relationships requires a number of skills. Professional trainers who have studied this process, such as those working at *Tribes TLC*®, can help staff members hone these skills. If not this particular training, be sure your program's ongoing commitment to organizational improvement includes some type of training in group process.

Notes

CHAPTER 4

Sharing With Others: Presentation Materials and Exercises

Promoting successful relationship building across a program requires consensus among staff to make this a program priority and to develop strategies to make it happen. The following are some tools for promoting discussion with your staff or others at your agency or school about relationship building. The following Personal Reflection Exercise is a good way to spark discussion. If there is a local youth serving agency that is known for their emphasis on and success in building relationships with young people, you may want to invite someone from that agency in as a guest speaker to offer inspiration and share experience.

EXERCISE:

Relationship Building Personal Reflection: My Story

This exercise is intended to help people present themselves and be heard in the group—the first stage of building relationships. It is a good opening to focus the group on the importance of relationship building.

Materials needed:

☐ Personal Reflection Exercise I: My Story, 1 copy per person.

Give each participant a copy of the Personal Reflection Exercise I: My Story. Ask the participants to take ten minutes to complete the handout, letting them know in advance that they will have an opportunity to share with a small group. Then break the group into smaller groups of four or five and ask the members of each group to share what they wrote with each other.

HANDOUT:

Relationship Building: My Story

Purpose: *To guide you through thinking about how you work with young people.*

1. What brought you to working with young people?

2. What are your guiding principles in working with young people?

3. How do you bring those principles alive with young people in your program?

4. What keeps you working with young people?

EXERCISE:

Relationship Building Personal Reflection: Important Events and People

This exercise has the same purpose as the one above, and is useful in groups that include people who don't work with young people on a regular basis.

Materials needed:

- ☐ Flip chart
- ☐ Markers

Post sheets from a flip chart on the walls around the room. Label each sheet with an age, one sheet for every age represented in your program (5 years old, 6 years old, and so on). Pass out markers, and ask people to move around the room, writing on the charts important events and people in their lives at the different ages. It is not necessary for every person to write on every chart. After a while, ask people to stop writing and allow a few minutes for them to read what others have written.

Group Discussion:

Gather the group together and hold a discussion based on the following questions:

- Did this exercise help you remember anything you had forgotten about being young?

- What was the relationship between important people and important events in your childhood?

- What kinds of people were important to you as you grew up? Did this change as you got older?

EXERCISE:

Relationship Building: Cookie Lady

This exercise is useful for identifying the factors that make a relationship meaningful to a young person.

Materials needed:

- ☐ flip chart
- ☐ markers

Read the following to the group:

> Think of a young person you work with in your after-school program. How old is that person? Now think of yourself when you were that age. Was there an adult who had a positive influence on you? It could be anyone—a teacher, relative, coach, the lady who gave you cookies at the corner store.

Ask the group to call out the different roles of people they thought of (sister, friend's parent, cookie lady). List these on a flip chart or blackboard and label them "Relationships." Now ask the group to call out what these people did that was supportive, and list these items (listened to me, trusted me with responsibility, pushed me to try harder). Label your second list "Supports."

Group Discussion:

Begin a discussion with the following question: What is so important about the supports you listed? It is interesting to note that this exercise has been done with hundreds of people and it is rare for anyone to say that the important thing about the relationship was the specific skill learned. In other words, it is unusual for someone to say "taught me math" or "taught me to play basketball" when asked how the relationship was supportive to them. You might bring this up with the group and ask them why they think this is true.

Further Staff Training Topics for Relationship Building:

- Agency or program policies, ground rules, and enforcement
- Active listening
- Positive discipline
- Tribes TLC®
- Conflict mediation for youth
- Crisis intervention

Relationship Building Checklist for Action

Now you are ready to start increasing Relationship Building in your program! This checklist is meant to help you stay organized and focused. Using it will help you ensure the success of your program.

Have you:

- ☐ Set aside ongoing staff time to thoroughly plan for relationship building, and to spend one-on-one time with young people?
- ☐ Assessed your program' s organizational practices to see if they support relationship building?
- ☐ Looked at how your agency or school allocates resources (time, space, and money) to support relationship building?
- ☐ Assessed the need for staff development and planned training?
- ☐ Ensured that each young person has at least one adult who knows him/her well?
- ☐ Created ground rules with the group?
- ☐ Posted ground rules?
- ☐ Prepared to follow-through consistently in enforcing ground rules?
- ☐ Planned ways to manage conflict among young people?
- ☐ Scheduled time for recognition and reflection?
- ☐ Selected a few promising areas to begin increasing Relationship Building?
- ☐ Defined specifically how you expect these activities to positively impact young people?
- ☐ Identified skills young people will need to build on their relationships?
- ☐ Planned to train young people in these skills?
- ☐ Created a plan to cover staff absences?
- ☐ Prepared staff to help young people in personal crisis situations?
- ☐ Created a plan to keep staff and volunteer turnover low?
- ☐ Incorporated measures of how well your program encourages relationship building into program assessment/evaluation?

Fostering Meaningful Youth Participation

5

Promoting leadership, decision making and a sense of belonging.

CHAPTER 5

What is Meaningful Youth Participation?

When program leaders speak of youth participation, they are usually referring to whether young people show up for the program and the degree to which they become engaged in program activities. However, research tells us that if we hope to make a difference in young people's development, simple participation is not enough—we need to provide opportunities for meaningful youth participation. If young people are engaged in meaningful participation, they are empowered to be self-directed, make responsible choices about how to use their time, and participate as group members in making decisions that influence the larger program.

They are also given the opportunity to learn group leadership skills and to assume leadership roles in planning activities and projects. They have opportunities to "give back" by contributing to the program, to other young people, or to their larger community.

"I was on the streets gang banging...Someone asked me if I wanted to join SLASH. They said I didn't have to stay if I didn't want to. But I liked it and I stayed—I'm fighting now, but for good causes. Working as a group—working with people as one—I have leadership skills that I didn't know I had."

—A.Z., 13 years old, Student Leaders Against Sexual Harassment (SLASH), Community Bridges Beacon, San Francisco, CA

We know that young people experience their participation as meaningful when they report feeling a sense of belonging and ownership in the program. When they are participating in meaningful ways, they feel that their contributions are valued, and, by participating, they "make a difference." In a program that fosters meaningful youth participation, adults serve as mentors and facilitators to build the skills of the young people. "Fostering meaningful youth participation means providing opportunities for problem solving, decision making, planning, goal setting, and helping others, and involves adults sharing power in real ways with children," writes Nan Henderson, prevention specialist i.

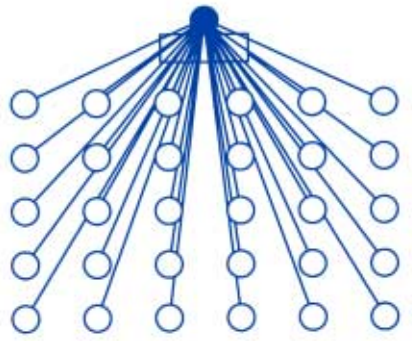
While this takes different forms depending on the age of the young people involved, the goal of fostering meaningful participation is appropriate for all ages, and especially important if we hope to engage and support adolescents.

Meaningful Youth Participation means that young people:

- Have opportunities to participate in decision making.
- Have opportunities to develop and practice leadership.
- Experience a sense of belonging.

A study of classroom teachers revealed that when teachers rely on traditional whole-class instruction methods, the teachers are talking more than two-thirds of the time. Of this time, more than 70% is spent disciplining, lecturing, giving instructions, and asking questions. When the classroom shifts to a more participatory student-centered structure, "teacher talk" time is reduced to 25%, and 75% of this time is spent praising, encouraging initiatives, giving feedback, facilitating student communication, and helping students.

Whole Class Instruction



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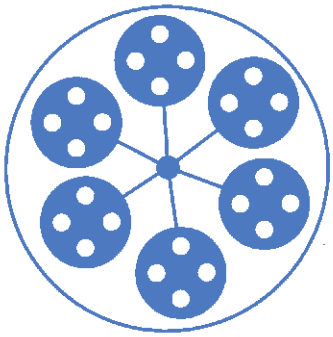
Interactive Learning

TEACHERS AS FACILITATORS



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Why is Meaningful Youth Participation Important?

Resiliency research affirms that young people's meaningful participation serves as a core protective factor for young people. In other words, regardless of their individual circumstances, meaningful participation helps young people overcome risks and obstacles in their lives, increasing their resiliency. Offering young people opportunities for meaningful involvement and responsibility is part of creating an environment that conveys high expectations. Drawing on their substantial base of research, the Search Institute emphasizes the importance of viewing young people as resources. We can do this by giving them useful roles, involving them in leadership, program planning and other meaningful activities related to program governance.

Immediate Benefits

Increasing meaningful participation in a program takes careful planning and can present challenges for program leaders. However, there are many benefits for the program as well as for individual young people.

When young people participate in planning and implementing their afterschool program, the program becomes more aligned with their interests. Attendance and interest increase, especially among older youth, and the new ideas brought by the young people can result in new and exciting activities. As young people become more involved in articulating what is important to them, program goals and objectives can become more youth-centered. As a result, the process of program assessment and evaluation becomes more meaningful for everyone involved.

"At first I went there and I didn't like it. They didn't have anything there for me. Then they came to me. They asked me what I liked. I told them and they started bringing in the programs that I liked. And I went to join."

M.H., age 13,
Community Bridges Beacon,
San Francisco, CA

As young people take more responsibility for their activities, staff members can reduce the time spent on discipline. Program staff feel rewarded as their role changes from supervisor to facilitator. Young people can begin to take on leadership and teaching roles and work in partnership with adults to maximize the opportunities for learning and growth for all participants. When we give young people the tools to be self-directed and invite them to take part in shaping their programs and helping others, we communicate the message to young people that "what you think and what you do matters."

How Do You Know If Your Program is Fostering Meaningful Youth Participation?

What You See

You can tell that a program supports meaningful participation when you walk into a program room, because the environment supports self-directed, purposeful activity. Examples of what you might see:

- Ground rules or guidelines are posted, announcing the young people's own rules about how they want to be treated and how they will use their program space and materials.
- Everyone is kept informed by a posting of the program's activity schedule and upcoming events, and any individual or group responsibilities that have been assigned.
- The program schedule allows time for participants to make choices about how they use their time.
- There are different areas for doing different kinds of work, including working individually and in groups.
- Storage areas for supplies and materials are clearly labeled so everyone can find them and put them away when finished.
- Evidence of youth-run projects and artwork are prominently displayed.

After the adults and young people arrive and the program begins, you can see evidence of meaningful participation in how people interact with one another:

- Transitions in and out of the program space and between activities are smooth because young people know what to do without ongoing adult direction.
- Young people are working with interest on activities and there is an acceptance of purposeful noise and energy in the classroom.
- Young people are directing themselves. They know to ask peers and adults for assistance, and how to find and care for the materials and tools they need.
- Young people are taking significant responsibility, helping each other, leading activities, planning projects, and demonstrating leadership skills learned within the program.

- Staff and volunteers are listening to ideas from young people and are willing to incorporate changes in the program accordingly.
- When asked for answers to problems or challenges, staff and volunteers often respond by posing a question that will help the young person find the answer independently or sensitively engage others in identifying possible solutions to the original question.

What Young People Say

The most reliable way to assess for meaningful participation is to ask the young people about their own experience of the program. Would young people in your program agree or disagree with the following statements?

- I help decide what happens here.
- I often get to choose which activities I'm going to do.
- I feel like my ideas count.
- I helped set rules for the program.
- I have been the leader of an activity.
- I have been in charge of supplies or equipment.
- I feel like I belong here.
- If I didn't show up, people would miss me.

SNAPSHOT

Girls, Inc.

Alameda County, CA

"We' re working to build more decision-making into the program," says Whitney Morris, Manager of Volunteers at Girls, Inc. of Alameda County. "We started small by asking the girls to do things like select the snack. Later on they selected their own representative for a public speaking engagement. Then we did a big project where they organized a scavenger hunt for the younger girls. They did everything—it took weeks! It would have been a lot easier for the staff to organize this ourselves, but we really let them do it. It was a lot of fun, and they felt successful."

Fostering Meaningful Youth Participation in Your After-School Program

Making The Change: Staff Discussions and Planning

While many people agree that experiencing meaningful participation has important impacts on young people, few programs succeed in engaging young people in a significant way. Why is this the case? First, engaging young people in this way is not easy. It requires a great deal of thought and planning. Second, adult staff may find it difficult and may need new skills to shift from playing a more directive or authoritarian role to playing the role of facilitator and mentor for young people. (See *Tribes TLC®* and *Helping Teens Stop Violence* in the *Resources* section at the end of this guide).

There is a trade-off when program leaders more actively involve young people as leaders: it is not always efficient. The activity or product may be of a lesser quality than if adult staff maintained full control of the "what, when,

how and who." For example, giving young people more control over creating and producing a play may not result in a better piece of theatre. But the process of involving young people in directing the activity helps them learn new skills and gives them a sense of ownership, which is key to their development and on-going engagement. Including a process for young people to reflect on their work and critique it after the project is completed will help them get the most out of the experience and strengthen their work on future projects.

Making the shift to more actively engaging young people requires not only a deep commitment to the young people in your program, but also a strong belief that meaningful youth participation offers many benefits. It is important to allocate the time with program staff to discuss these issues, assess the organization's commitment to promoting opportunities for meaningful participation, and identify the specific resources it will take to introduce new program strategies. (For more information, see the section on *Organizational Practices that Support Meaningful Participation*).

Readiness for Meaningful Youth Participation

Meaningful participation is dependent on a solid level of trust between adults and young people. Participants must feel secure that differences in opinions and varying levels of skill will be accepted, and that their peer leaders will use their leader status with sensitivity. (See the preceding chapters on *Promoting Safety* and *Encouraging Relationship Building*.) Newly formed groups need to first establish themselves and pace the level of participation with the group's development. (See *Tribes TLC®* in the *Resources* section at the end of this guide for more information).

The level of participation also depends on the experience and skills of the adult program leaders and young people involved. Important skills for adult leaders include active listening, group facilitation, techniques for building consensus, project planning and conflict resolution. Program strategies will also vary depending on the age of the young people involved. Remember that it is equally important for both young children and older youth to learn skills for greater self-reliance and to take on leadership roles in age-appropriate ways. For younger children, this may be as simple as teaching them a skill that will contribute to the program (such as sweeping the floor), or helping them figure out how they can best contribute to the group. Small children spend a lot of time receiving help from others, and they love to know the ways they can be self-sufficient or helpful to others. (For more on this topic, see Maria Montesorri's *The Absorbent Mind* and *The Secret of Childhood*, as well as *Tribes TLC®*. These are listed in the *Resources* Section at the end of this guide.)

SNAPSHOT

Destiny Arts Center

Oakland, CA

Destiny Arts Center in Oakland, CA, is a multi-age (3-18), multi-cultural program that promotes violence prevention with young people from the inner city through martial arts, dance, and youth leadership. Destiny develops youth leadership across age categories by providing logical "stepping stones". Executive Director Reba Rose says, "We encourage lots of peer mentoring. We might ask a young person who has only been here for six months to lead a familiar part of the warm-up routine with adult supervision. Then they might move on to teaching a basic skill to a new member of the group. Later on they may lead a smaller group in practicing a specific skill. Teens (ages 12-18) can take part in a teacher training program, and then lead workshops in the community for youth and adults. We gauge a youth's development, and seize the moment to ask young people to step into a new leadership role."

Youth Participation with Adult Support

Teachers and youth workers with less experience may confuse youth empowerment and leadership strategies with the absence of rules and boundaries—"you have to step out of the way, let the young people do what they want and hope they figure it out." This approach may prove—at best—highly frustrating for the adults and the young participants. While it is true that adult staff members must let go of control over some aspects of the group's process, participants will still need the facilitative support of adult staff and the expectation that agreed-upon group rules must continue to be honored. (Resources for staff training in youth facilitation are included in the *Resources* section of this guide.)

Change Over Time

A solid plan for increasing meaningful participation will include fading facilitation and cascading leadership. Fading facilitation happens when strong adult leaders allow their presence to recede into the background as the young people become more prepared to take responsibility. One can think of the youth leaders as apprentices, at times needing more or less support from their adult mentors, depending on their abilities.

Cascading leadership occurs when young people pass their leadership on to others coming up after them. This often happens naturally in a group, as young people look up to those a few years older and picture themselves in the same role in the near future. Staff members can support cascading leadership by giving younger or less experienced members of the group opportunities to learn leadership skills, and by encouraging older or more experienced members to pass on their skills to others.

SNAPSHOT

Girls, Inc.

Alameda County, CA

A low youth to Staff/ Volunteer Ratio was crucial to the success of the Women's History Month project for the youngest girls at *Girls, Inc.* of Alameda County. Sixty girls ages 6-8 began their project in small groups supported by 30 adult and youth volunteers, who helped them read several books about powerful women. The girls each chose one woman, researched her life, and created a project about her using a variety of media (writing, collage, public presentations). The presence and continued involvement of many committed volunteers enabled this group of very young girls to produce a significant academic and artistic project.

Styles of Participation

It is worth noting that young people show their participation in different ways and that different cultures define participation differently. Some young people may like to listen and learn before stepping up to take an active role, while others may want to leap right in and start doing. In some cultures, participation is demonstrated through quiet attention.

Young people's style of participation may also vary depending on their learning style and personality. For example, some children are most easily engaged verbally, others physically, others through art or music. It is important to be aware of the different cultures and styles of the individuals in your program when planning opportunities for participation.

Styles of Leadership

Leadership can also take many forms. Team captains, class presidents, young people on councils, and young people in positions of visibility are often pointed out as leaders. However, not all young people are going to take on

such roles. When we restrict our vision of leadership to the person "leading the charge," we automatically limit the number of young people who can be leaders. A more encompassing vision of leadership includes the child who stays after an activity to help clean, the one who intervenes with peers to mediate a disagreement, the committee who plans a party, and the pair who creates a flyer. Groups can exhibit leadership when they plan their own activities or when they work with groups of younger children.

The wise staff member will also make use of the natural leadership ability of the class clown, the leaders of group opinion and fashion, and even the one who regularly voices group resentments. Sometimes young people are labeled "trouble-makers" when they are really just energetic, or expressing a need to practice their independence. When young people lack positive opportunities for leadership, they will take on negative leadership roles. Try giving them a position of responsibility. Let them help a younger group with an activity, put them in charge of the job chart, let them teach a skill or distribute the basketballs. (For more on this, see materials from the *Youth Leadership Institute*. Contact information is listed in the *Resources* Section of this guide).

"Leadership isn't only having strong skills, it could also be modeling the values of the center, steady participation, or showing focus during class."

—Reba Rose,
Executive Director,
Destiny Arts Center
Oakland, CA.

Organizational Practices that Support Meaningful Youth Participation

There are certain structural features an organization needs to have in place if it is going to consistently provide opportunities for meaningful participation. These organizational practices require the commitment of everyone at the school or agency, not just the program staff. The following are the organizational practices that most directly support meaningful youth participation.

Youth Involvement at the Organizational Level

It is critical to involve young people in program planning as your school or agency initiates its after-school program, in on-going implementation activities, and in program assessment. Young people can offer input in brainstorming or group planning sessions, on surveys, or as representatives in agency or program planning sessions. They can plan, co-lead, or lead activities as their interests and skills allow. They can help set goals for the program and participate in program evaluation. When young people are present and involved at every stage, programs are bound to better reflect their interests.

Particular attention should be paid to how you involve young people in planning and decision making settings where the majority of the participants are adults. It is highly recommended that adult planning participants be trained in how to effectively make room for and engage young people in planning and decision-making. (For more information, see the Four-H Council's *At the Table*, listed in the *Resources* Section at the end of this guide.)

Providing Opportunities for Meaningful Participation at all Levels of the Organization

Strategies for fostering youth participation are most effective when meaningful participation is modeled at all levels of the sponsoring school or agency. This means that all staff members, parents, and volunteers involved in the after-school program have opportunities for decision-making, leadership, and belonging. In particular it is important for people to have input into the decisions that will affect them, and for evaluation and planning efforts to consider the expertise and unique perspective of all stakeholders. Organizations can provide these opportunities by ensuring that planning committees include many perspectives and that evaluation efforts receive input from diverse stakeholders. Implementing site-based decision-making, creating parent involvement committees, and holding agency or program-wide social events also offer opportunities for meaningful participation by staff, parents, and others.

Flexibility in Allocating Resources

Flexibility in allocating resources is clearly important in providing opportunities for meaningful youth participation. If program participants want a DJ club or a hip-hop dance class and you only have funding for a soccer class, it is going to be difficult to engage these young people. When you ask young people about the activities they want, let them know what the financial limitations are upfront. If young people do come up with ideas that can't be implemented, give them honest reasons why their suggestions can't be put into practice. Trust that they can understand your constraints, and work to help them understand these constraints.

"At first I was a tutee. Then I realized I could be a tutor!"

J.P, 13 years old, Richmond Village Beacon Center, San Francisco, CA

Accessible Space

Providing accessible space is fundamental to supporting youth participation. This means preparing the space so young people can use it as independently as possible. There is an important difference for young people when they can get the paints themselves and start painting, rather than having to ask an adult. (Imagine if the adult staff had to ask their supervisor every time they needed to use the stapler). Preparing the space may mean lowering shelves, teaching young people the proper use of materials, and creating signs or written directions for use. It also means making the space look like a place for young people, where they can laugh, make a mess, put their feet up.

Low Youth to Staff/Volunteer Ratio

An appropriately low youth to staff/volunteer ratio is also important to maintaining meaningful participation. The fact that young people can increase their independence and take on leadership roles does not mean that they don't need adult support. It simply means that the adult role shifts from being the leader to providing the considerable support necessary to maintain youth leadership.

Ongoing, Results-Based Staff and Organizational Improvement Process

The ability of an agency or school to engage young people in meaningful participation depends on the organization allocating time for program planning and reflection, providing training opportunities for adults, and implementing a process for authentic program assessment and evaluation.

Involving young people is critical to assessing the impact of your program: the most accurate way to measure program quality is to ask young people about their experiences within the organization. Young people can also be involved in the design of the assessment or evaluation. Ways to involve young people in assessment include:

- Engaging young people in developing and reviewing the measurable indicators of meaningful youth participation, safety, positive relationships, challenging learning experiences, and opportunities for community involvement. Ask young people what these terms mean to them and what they would look for to measure program quality in these areas. Ask them what they think is important about the programs they choose to participate in.
- Involving young people in piloting assessment surveys. Feedback from young people will ensure that assessment survey questions carry the same meanings for the young people surveyed as they do for the adults who developed the tool. Piloting surveys with young people will ensure that the language is appropriate for those being surveyed. Also, young people often give excellent feedback on how to make the surveys easier and more interesting to use.

Reflection:

Are there other ways your organization could support program staff in fostering meaningful youth participation?

Five Things You Can Do NOW to Foster Meaningful Youth Participation

1. Train Participants in Group Decision Making Skills

A good place to start is to train young people in the process of brainstorming and group decision-making. (See *Tribes TLC*® for useful guidance on this type of training.) Group decision making skills can be put to use immediately in developing the needed group agreements regarding how people want to be treated, how they will care for their materials and supplies, etc. Make sure adult staff members have skills for leading brainstorming sessions and facilitating group decision-making before you start.

2. Encourage Self-Reliance and Responsibility to the Group

Allow young people to responsibly address their own needs, whether it is access to the drinking fountain or to art supplies. Design your program space and storage system in a way that allows young people free access to needed project supplies, materials and equipment. The privilege of access comes with responsibilities of caring for and returning things to their proper place. Brainstorm the needed agreements with your group to ensure the respectful use of these materials.

3. Give Young People Choices

Young people feel more involved in a program when they are given real choices. Schedule program times when the young people can individually choose what they wish to do. Some may prefer group games; others may wish to work alone, drawing or reading, while some may simply want to socialize.

Young people can participate in planning program activities. You may want to start with a small activity or block of time that they are responsible for planning, and then build up. Let them know about any constraints from the beginning. Within those constraints, try to really trust their ideas and enthusiasm. If a planned activity doesn't work, it presents an opportunity for the group to analyze and learn. Once a process for reflection has been established with the young people involved in planning, it can be used regularly.

4. Provide Opportunities for Young People to Help Others

Everyone feels more involved when they have responsibilities to those around them and are able to use what they know to help others. Allow

participants to share responsibilities for the proper care and maintenance of their program assets, making and serving snacks, and assisting peers within their programs. Young people can be trained to effectively assist peers during homework time and during other activities. Try to give every child or young person an opportunity to help another, so that some aren't always in the helper position and others always in the position of being helped. Newcomers to the program can be assigned buddies to show them around the room, explain ground rules, and help them learn the routine. You can also teach a skill to a small group, and then "deputize" them to teach others.

Older youth are also excellent helpers for younger children, and the helper role often brings out the best in them. Duties can include serving as "reading buddies," homework helpers, escorts, or making informational presentations to the younger groups.

Providing service to the larger community is also an excellent way for young people to apply their planning and leadership skills, while experiencing how their efforts impact others. (See Chapter Six, *Providing Opportunities for Community Involvement*, for more about engaging young people in community service.)

5. Involve Young People in Serving on Formal Decision-Making Bodies

There are many ways to involve young people in an organization's decision-making bodies. They can serve on planning, safety, fundraising, hiring or other committees. With experience and support, they can also serve as youth representatives on the organization's Board of Directors. However, the place to begin is not with the young people, but with the adults within the organization. Are they committed to taking the time and effort to involve young people and do they have the skills to know how to do this effectively?

Before inviting young people to serve on committees or boards, it is important for the adults involved to do their homework. This means gathering information and building their capacity to facilitate the involvement of young people in decision-making and governance. Consider the necessary training to prepare everyone for this work and give yourselves sufficient time to prepare so that you won't rush the process. We recommend that after-school programs seek guidance from organizations with expertise in this area, such as Youth on Board and the Youth Leadership Institute (see the *Resources* Section at the end of this guide).

It is also helpful to identify a youth serving organization that has successfully involved young people in their decision making. Invite them to speak to your organization and share what they've learned. Make sure you speak with their youth leaders about the experience; they may lead you to other resources.

You will probably be advised to start small. It is a good idea to choose a committee or activity that is time-limited, that holds obvious interest for the young people involved, and that involves adult participants who are committed to making the experience work for young people.

It is also a good idea to have an experienced mentor assigned to support young people who may be inexperienced at this kind of work. The mentor can help by establishing a relationship with the young people, explaining before meetings what will happen, and why it is important to the organization, and checking in with young people after meetings to be sure there are no questions or problems. Be sure that meetings and committee work can be scheduled around school hours, and encourage adult members to avoid unnecessary jargon or overly restrictive rules of order. Once you have a pool of young people, staff, and other adults who have successfully completed some projects together, you can look for ways of involving young people at higher levels of governance in the organization.

Notes

CHAPTER 5

Sharing With Others: Presentation Materials and Exercises

Programs are more effective at fostering meaningful youth participation when all stakeholders involved in the after-school program support this as an important program goal. The following are some tools for sharing with your staff or others at your school or agency to get everyone thinking about meaningful youth participation. You might want to read the section at the beginning of this chapter together. The following Personal Reflection Exercise is a good way to spark discussion. If there is a local youth serving agency with a particularly strong youth participation component, you may want to invite someone from that agency in as a guest speaker to offer inspiration and share their experience.

EXERCISE:

Personal Reflection: Youth Participation

This exercise is intended to help people in your agency or school remember what it was like to be young, and to be faced with choices or the lack of choices. It is a good opening to focus the group on the importance of fostering youth participation.

Materials needed:

- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils

Begin by telling participants that you are going to do a personal reflection. Ask them to close their eyes, and spend a few minutes thinking about their own experience. Then read the following:

> Think of one of the children or young people in your program. Now think back to when you were that age, and try to remember your experiences of school. Who was your teacher? What kinds of things did she or he say to you? What did the classroom look like? What did you wear?
>
> Now think for a moment about how you participated in that setting.

- What kinds of choices were available to you?
- What kinds of things were you responsible for in that setting?
- If you needed something, how did you fulfill that need? If you needed a drink or to use the bathroom, or a pencil, how did you go about this?
- What kinds of things could you do without adult direction?
- What kinds of things did you and your peers get to decide?
- Were you encouraged to practice independence? How did you receive guidance when you faltered? How were mistakes viewed?

Personal Reflection continued

- When you weren't allowed to make decisions, who did? What empowered you to make those decisions? Did you cooperate or resist?

- What did you do when you didn't like what was going on? When did you fully participate?

Group Discussion:

Before holding a group discussion you might want to give the participants an opportunity to write down some highlights of what they learned in the Personal Reflection Exercise. Then hold a discussion using the following questions to facilitate sharing and learning from each participant's experience.

- What are some of the things that you remembered about your own experiences as you were reflecting?

- Why might it be important for young people to have input into decisions that affect them?

- How might they grow if they are allowed to take responsibility for fulfilling some of their own needs and guiding some of their own actions?

- Why might it be important for them to have opportunities for leadership?

- How does this relate to the developmental outcomes we want for all young people (learning to be productive, to be connected, to navigate)? What is the impact on young people when they spend much of their time in institutions that don't reflect their input?

EXERCISE:

Locating Opportunities for Youth Participation

This exercise will help your school or agency look for new ways young people can be involved in your programs at every age.

Materials needed:

- ☐ Flip chart or butcher paper
- ☐ Markers

Have staff members break into small teams. One team will focus on 5-7 year-olds, one on 8-10 year-olds, and one on 11-14 year-olds. (If your program doesn't serve all of these age groups, focus on the ages you do serve.) Each group brainstorms answers to the following questions:

- What things can children in your age group do?

- How can we build on these skills to develop participation and leadership?

Group Discussion:

Have each group share their answers with the larger group. Discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into program activities.

EXERCISE:

Practitioner Assessment of Youth Participation and Leadership Development

This exercise provides an opportunity to explore whether your after-school program is providing optimal opportunities for meaningful youth participation.

Materials needed:

- ☐ Practitioner Assessment of Youth Participation and Leadership Development (1 copy per person).
- ☐ Continuum of Youth Participation (1 copy per person).

As a group, look at the Continuum of Youth Participation on page 115. Consider where your program falls on the scale. Where would you like it to fall? How do adults' roles change as the young people's roles change?

Give each participant a copy of the *Practitioner Assessment of Youth Participation and Leadership Development* on page 95 and 96. Ask each participant to go through the exercise and answer each question.

Group Discussion:

Have a discussion when the participants have finished filling out the questionnaire. You may want to begin the discussion with a general question asking participants what they learned when filling out the questionnaire. This could be followed up with a focus on specific questions.

HANDOUT:

Practitioner Assessment

Purpose: *To guide you through thinking about the opportunities that you provide for youth participation and leadership development.*

1. How do you motivate young people to join? To take responsibility?

2. Do you get young people's input into activity planning? How?

3. Do you get young people's input into program design? How?

4. Do you get young people's feedback after they have participated in activities? How?

Practitioner Assessment continued

5. Do you ensure that young people's input has impact on the program? How?

6. Do you identify potential leaders? How?

7. What training/assistance/support might young people need to take leadership roles in your program? Is this support provided?

8. Do young people get involved in assessment and evaluation development?

9. What leadership roles do young people take in your organization? In your program? (Interns? Staff? Board members? Mentors?, etc.)

HANDOUT:

Attitudinal Principles to Maximize Youth Participation

This is a useful hand-out summarizing guidelines to help staff and volunteers think about their daily interactions with young people.

- **Never give an order or direction without a reason.**
  Young people will recognize your authority as legitimate when there is a reason behind what you ask of them. "Because I said so" is one of the worst things you can say to a young person.
- **Look for places where young people can take responsibility.**
  Never underestimate the capability of young people. Giving responsibility creates a sense of ownership and pride. Don't forget the little responsibilities such as taking attendance and cleaning up. Assign roles according to interest and talent, and try to be sure there is a role for everyone.
- **Make processes explicit.**
  Explain how you make decisions and why (better yet, involve the young people in the process). Be ready to answer questions about agency or program policy, budget, and goals.
- **Allow for failure.**
  Of course, we have a responsibility to prevent major accidents. However, it can be disempowering if we step in too quickly to make sure everything works out right. Sometimes the process and the learning experience are more important than reaching your original goal. Be sure to help young people analyze setbacks in such a way that they become learning experiences.
- **Practice common courtesy with young people.**
  Young people deserve the same courteous treatment we would give parents, supervisors, or funders. Listen to the language you use when speaking to participants.
- **Approach the work with humility.**
  This means being willing to let go of our ideas about what the group should be doing, or what the goals should be. It also means not being overly invested in how much young people like our ideas or us. We have to be able to let go of our plans and let relationships develop at their own speed if the young people are to take the lead. On the other hand, it is important to know when to be an adult, stepping in to protect vulnerable members of the group, for example.

HANDOUT:

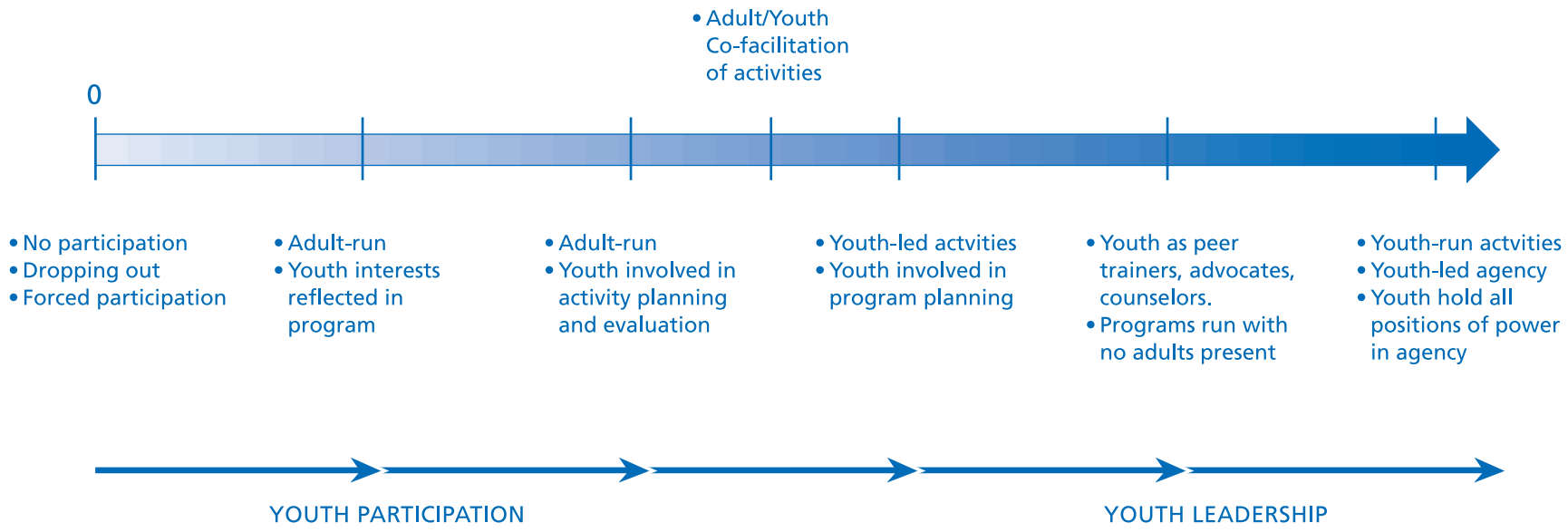
Steps Toward Increasing Meaningful Youth Participation

You can use this list and assess where your program is on the following continuum:

- Getting young people involved in stating goals/needs
- Getting young people involved in activity planning
- Getting young people involved in program assessment/evaluation
- Identifying leaders in the group
- Training young people in leadership skills (facilitation, conflict resolution, peer counseling, advocacy, activity planning and design)
- Having young people train, recruit and support each other (older youth train and support younger youth)
- Involving young people in program planning/strategic planning, evaluation, development, staff hiring, and/or developing program goals
- Placing young people on the Board of Directors or other governing bodies

HANDOUT:

Continuum of Youth Participation



Youth Participation: Student Survey of Program Preferences

This is a survey of young people's interests which you can customize for your program.

We need your help! We want to create an after-school program that is exciting and useful for you. Please answer the following questions to tell us about your opinions and ideas for after-school activities. If you would like to get even more involved in planning after-school activities, or being a club officer, ask your teacher for more information about the after-school program.

1. Please check the sentence that best describes your feelings about attending an after-school program at our school. (check one)

- ☐ *I already participate in after-school activities.*
- ☐ *I would definitely be interested in going to an after-school program at our school.*
- ☐ *I have other responsibilities after-school and could not go to an after-school program at our school.*
- ☐ *I am not interested in going to an after-school program at our school.*

2. What kind of activities would you like to do after-school? Feel free to add your own ideas. (check up to four)

- ☐ *Chess*
- ☐ *Community service*
- ☐ *Computer Club*
- ☐ *Homework help or tutoring*
- ☐ *Junior Achievement*
- ☐ *Photography*
- ☐ *Poetry writing*
- ☐ *School newspaper*
- ☐ *Science experiments*
- ☐ *Aerobic exercise*
- ☐ *Basketball*
- ☐ *Cheerleading*
- ☐ *Gymnastics*
- ☐ *Martial arts*
- ☐ *Soccer*
- ☐ *Softball/baseball*
- ☐ *Volleyball*
- ☐ *Yoga*
- ☐ *Arts and crafts*
- ☐ *Card and board games*
- ☐ *Cooking*
- ☐ *Dance*
- ☐ *Drama*
- ☐ *Field trips*
- ☐ *Music*
- ☐ *Peer counseling/ conflict resolution*
- ☐ *Woodworking*
- ☐ *Your idea:* _____
- ☐ *Your idea:* _____
- ☐ *Your idea:* _____

Student Survey continued

3. What are some ways you would like to get involved in the after-school program? (check all that apply)

- ☐ *Deciding what programs to offer*
- ☐ *Planning after-school activities*
- ☐ *Being a club officer*
- ☐ *Advertising the after-school program*
- ☐ *Your idea:* _____
- ☐ *I am not interested in getting involved.*

4. Which types of "advertisement" would convince you to participate in the after-school activities? (check all that apply)

- ☐ *Student-designed posters*
- ☐ *Flyers mailed home*
- ☐ *Presentations by students who are in the after-school program*
- ☐ *Articles about the program in the school newspaper*
- ☐ *Daily announcements about the program (read by an adult)*
- ☐ *Daily announcements about the program (read by a student)*
- ☐ *Rewards—such as homework passes, gift certificates, or other treats— for students who regularly attend activities.*
- ☐ *Your idea:* _____
- ☐ *Your idea:* _____

Your name: _____

Your Homeroom teacher or room number: _____

Thank You!

Further Staff Training Topics for Youth Participation

- Group decision-making processes
- Active listening
- Project Planning
- Group Facilitation
- Teaching conflict resolution to young people
- Teaching facilitation skills to young people
- Child and adolescent development
- Peer education
- Resisting ageism

Youth Participation: Checklist for Action

This checklist will help you stay focused and organized as you begin to make meaningful youth participation a priority in your program.

Have you:

- ☐ Set aside ongoing staff time to thoroughly plan for fostering meaningful youth participation and leadership development?
- ☐ Assessed the need for staff development and planned for training?
- ☐ Assessed your school or agency's organizational practices to see if they support meaningful youth participation?
- ☐ Looked at how your agency or school allocates resources (time, space, money) to support meaningful youth participation?
- ☐ Asked the young people about their interests and their ideas for programming?
- ☐ Planned ways to ensure that young people's input affects programming?
- ☐ Defined specifically how you expect youth participation activities to positively impact young people?
- ☐ Planned ways for different styles of leadership to emerge?
- ☐ Identified leadership potential in young people of different ages, styles, and personalities?
- ☐ Identified skills young people will need to take on leadership roles?
- ☐ Scheduled time for recognition and reflection?
- ☐ Planned to train youth in these skills?
- ☐ Planned for fading facilitation?
- ☐ Prepared young people for cascading leadership?
- ☐ Created ways for young people to participate in program evaluation?
- ☐ Incorporated outcomes related to fostering meaningful youth participation into program evaluation?

Providing Opportunities for Community Involvement

6

Helping young people connect to the community.

CHAPTER 6

What Is Community Involvement?

Providing opportunities for **community involvement** in after-school programs means offering young people activities that increase their knowledge of their communities and promote a sense of positive belonging to the community. Community knowledge includes learning about the community's history, its people and the diverse cultures they represent, and its resources. It may also include learning about the real life challenges the community and its residents face. Opportunities for community involvement allow young people to give back to others through community service activities.

For young people this means moving from their more usual role of being helped to being someone who can capably help others and promote change.

For program leaders, providing opportunities for community involvement requires finding ways to bring the community into the after-school program. One way to do this is to recruit community members to introduce young people to their cultural histories and traditions, to share their talents and experiences through presentations, to teach classes, or to serve as volunteer mentors or tutors.

"The healthy development of young people to become productive participants in their world requires that they be supported to develop leadership and exercise that leadership to improve lives and communities."

—Laurie Olsen and Amy Scharf, California Tomorrow, San Francisco, CA[ii]

Creating these opportunities also requires taking the after-school program "beyond the program walls," out to the community. This means creating opportunities for young people to meet community leaders and residents, to explore the community, and to research the problems faced by the community and identify ways that they can actively be part of the solution.

Community Involvement means that young people:

- Build knowledge of the community beyond the program.
- Have a chance to give back to the community.
- Experience a sense of connection to a larger community.

Why is Community Involvement Important?

Research on childhood resiliency and youth development, as well as studies on the prevention of high risk behaviors, affirms the importance of young people feeling a connection to their community. Further, involvement in active and useful roles in service to others is "associated with higher self-esteem, enhanced moral development, increased political activism, and the ability to create and maintain complex social relationships[i]."

Immediate Benefits

In addition to contributing to young people's healthy development over time, community involvement can also help programs meet their more immediate outcomes. Community involvement can offer young people the opportunity to learn about topics that are not usually part of the school day curriculum. This can increase young people's engagement in the after-school program. This is particularly true when topics are keyed to their own interests.

When young people can see the connections between the program activities and their own lives in the community, their interest and motivation to participate is enhanced. As they meet and learn about people in the community who are different than themselves, they develop a greater understanding and appreciation for diversity. When activities, such as youth-led community service projects, require that young people work together to accomplish their goals, participants have the opportunity to learn and master important life skills. These include specific skills in communication, problem solving, decision-making, and the many collaborative skills necessary for successful teamwork. As their groups experience success, young people form deeper bonds with their peers and their community. Perhaps most importantly, activities that involve service to others allow young people to feel valued for the contributions they make.

Young people are not the only ones who benefit when they engage in a meaningful way with community residents and organizations. When adults and community members have positive exchanges with young people, everyone revisits their stereotypes of the "other." Adults are more likely to hold a positive view of young people, voice their support for resources dedicated to young people, and even decide to play an active role in supporting the needs of young people.

In many communities, there are significant barriers between the community residents and their public schools. After-school programs can break down these barriers by inviting community agencies and residents into their school-

based programs, working to "bring the public back into public schools." Community members bring specialized knowledge, wisdom, new perspectives and valuable experiences. They serve as resources for program staff, as well as young participants.

Finally, when we provide opportunities for community involvement, we affirm that young people are critical assets to the communities in which they live. As Amy Scharf and Laura Woodlief write:

> *Equity for diverse groups in society depend—both in the short term and in the long term—on young people from all backgrounds (and especially those from marginalized groups) having the tools, knowledge and ability to analyze and act on the world around them. Within families and communities, this means that they find ways to build strong relationships, contribute positively to their environments, value themselves and those who are different from them, and question and transform the status quo when necessary. At the most comprehensive level, education and youth development work is just not about inward growth, but also about strengthening communities and society*[iii].

How Do You Know if Your Program is Providing Opportunities For Community Involvement?

What You See

You can see that your program offers young people opportunities for community involvement by looking at who is in the room and what is happening. Examples of what you might see:

- There are objects and wall displays that reflect the program's interest in the surrounding neighborhood and community: neighborhood maps, items reflecting the cultural diversity of the community, listings of community resources.
- There are a variety of community residents, family members and agency workers who participate in the program as presenters, instructors, volunteer tutors and mentors, and in other ways.
- Program participants are traveling beyond the program site, out to the community to meet people and learn about the community's resources and needs.

- Young people are learning about cultures and communities different from their own.
- Young people are actively involved in researching the challenges faced by their community, and how best they can contribute to addressing the issues.
- Young people are engaging in projects that make their communities safer, more beautiful, fun, caring, and just.
- Young people are thinking critically about problems in their community, and acting to participate in solutions.

What Young People Say

The most reliable way to assess whether your community involvement efforts are successful is to ask the young people about their own experience of the program. When asked, young people in an after-school program that makes community involvement a priority might say:

- I've had a chance to do things to help people in my community.
- In this program I get to go places that I don't usually go.
- I've learned a lot more about things that young people can do in my community.
- I know more about what is going on in my community.
- I know more about how to get things I need in my community.
- I've learned about ways I can make things better in my community.

Providing Opportunities for Community Involvement in Your After-School Program

Beliefs About Young People

It is important for the staff to reflect on their underlying beliefs about young people and their readiness and interest in serving the community. One study found large differences between how youth and adults think about serving young people:

> *On one hand, adults worried about all of the needs and problems that young people had and how adults could remedy them. The young folks, on the other hand, focused on their desire to contribute and do more. They expressed a strong yearning for purpose, for meaning, for ways to be useful to the wider community, especially in non-patronizing, intergenerational efforts.*[iv]

In wanting to protect and teach young people, adults often overlook opportunities for young people to assume roles that can bring them a sense of value. These opportunities promote an important "I can do it. I make a difference" attitude. How do your adult staff view young people? Does staff see young people as problems about to happen, as a resource to be developed for future use, or as a community resource that can make a difference now?

Considering the Many Worlds Within a Single Community

Begin by working with the young people to create a geographic definition of what you mean by "community." Once you all agree on a geographic definition, it is important to remember that people's experience of this geographic community may be very different. For instance, young people who are recent immigrants and who primarily interact with neighbors and business establishments that share their cultural background may have a very different experience of community than young people who are native-born English-speakers. When planning for community involvement in an after-school program, consider the many different affiliations your young people may have and allow time to explore these differences.

Before considering ways to increase young people's involvement with the surrounding community, it is a good idea to conduct some group discussions about how different people experience their community. What are the different affiliations your young people have? Young people's communities may be organized around music scenes, sports teams, clubs, or the recreational activities they feel help define them. What are the different affiliations your young people have? How does this differ from those of your adult staff?

Remember that people of different ages will also define community and community needs differently. It is not surprising that when a group of young people in Alameda, California mounted a successful public support campaign to build a new kind of public park, it was an outdoor skateboard park that they envisioned. (*Imagine how different the outcome would have been if senior citizens or parents of new infants were given the charge of designing a new park for the community*).

You might use a large wall map to identify the areas of the community that your participants are most and least familiar with. Perhaps you can identify the areas that young people would like to learn more about. Is everyone familiar with the larger community's "mainstream" resources, such as the museums, art centers, parks, and senior citizen centers? What about the resources that "insiders" of different groups can share with young people, such as small cultural arts theatres focused on preserving a group's culture and traditions or groups working on a particular community issue? Are there ways to introduce young people to other informal resources, such as the specialty stores and delicious restaurants in particular ethnic areas of the community? Are there local residents who have amazing experiences and stories to tell or special talents that few know about?

Involving Young People in Designing Service Projects

Program leaders often view community service as projects that adults plan and young people do. However, this approach fails to draw upon the perspectives and interests of young people. When the project ideas come from the program participants, they are more interested in the project and this helps build a natural momentum for project activities. Keeping in mind that how you gather young people's input will depend on the age, interests, and structure of the group, here are a few suggestions:

- Begin with a conversation about community. Ask the young people in your program how they define community.
- Be alert to the interests of the young people in your program. Are there ways to connect to the community through these interests?
- Involve families in discussions about community, in planning for community involvement, and in the actual activities you plan. They are an important resource, and can keep the idea of community alive at home.
- Young people may be inspired if you let them know that their help is needed in the community. Let your enthusiasm show and point out frequently the contributions they are making, whether big or small. Ensure that others outside of the program know of their work and recognize their efforts publicly.

Start Small

As you prepare for increasing opportunities for community, it is a good idea to start small, and build on your successes with larger efforts. This is true for involving community members or groups in your program. It is a good idea to give new community partners, whether individuals or groups, relatively small responsibilities until you find out how they work with your program. Ensure that they are recognized and appreciated for their contributions. It is also true in beginning service projects. Young people can be discouraged if their first project is too big in scope and they don't see results quickly enough.

Do the Necessary Homework

When community involvement activities include community service projects, it is important that young people have a chance to understand the underlying issues their service is meant to address. For example, if students plan to help clean up a local playground, they could spend some time exploring questions such as: "What is the impact of litter on our community?" "Where are the safe places for children to play in this neighborhood?" and "Why was this playground allowed to become so dirty?" This process teaches young people to think critically and exercise problem-solving skills even as they become part of the solution.

Young people, like adults, will bring their own set of beliefs and assumptions, along with concrete knowledge of the particular issue, to any service project. Allow the young people to do research so they can test their assumptions. In considering solutions, find out what existing community groups are already doing to tackle these problems. What other strategies have already been tried? How can the young people imagine contributing to the effort?

For example, by interviewing people at a homeless shelter, young people from one after-school program learned that their original idea of collecting canned food wasn't what was most needed. Shelter residents told them that their more pressing need was warm clothing, especially coats and gloves, for the coming winter—something that had not occurred to the program's young people or adult staff. With this new information, the young people enthusiastically changed their project accordingly. When young people learn to take a thoughtful approach to addressing problems, they become prepared to function as leaders in creating effective community solutions.

SNAPSHOT

Community Bridges Beacon

San Francisco, CA

Urban ArtWorks is a program at this Beacon Center that uses ceramic mosaics as a way to express themes of youth power. Recently the young people in the program created a dramatic mosaic mural for the Mission District community. They decided to place it on one of the most popular locations in the Mission, the 16th Street Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Station. BART officials welcomed the idea, and helped the young people make it a reality.

Organizational Practices That Support Community Involvement

There are certain structural features a program needs to have in place if it is going to consistently provide meaningful opportunities for community involvement. These organizational practices require the commitment of everyone at the agency or school. The following are organizational practices that are most directly related to community involvement.

Low Youth to Staff/Volunteer Ratio

Maintaining a low ratio of young people to adults will help community involvement activities run more smoothly. More actively engaging the community can also help programs lower their ratio of young people to staff. It does take time outside of the program to recruit and prepare volunteers, but there can be many benefits as young people get more one-on-one attention, and have the opportunity to form relationships with many different adults.

"We went to interview Mayor Jerry Brown. We talked to him about Prop 21, prisons, when he was governor, and what he thinks about schools."

—B.W., 12 years old, Museum of Children's Art, Oakland, CA

Flexibility in Allocating Available Resources

As young people get caught up in a community project, it may take a direction that staff never anticipated. It is important to have the ability to change plans and reallocate resources when this happens. Activities that involve the community can also take on a life of their own, bringing new resources into the program.

Continuity and Consistency of Care

Meaningful community involvement projects take time to develop. Young people need time to understand and explore the issues, plan an activity, learn any needed skills to carry it out, and reflect afterwards. They also need consistent staff support throughout this process. In addition, it takes time and effort to build trusting relationships in the community. When there is high staff turnover, these relationships are damaged. It is important to take appropriate measures to retain qualified staff.

Ongoing, Results-Based Staff and Organizational Improvement Process

Prioritizing community involvement opportunities means ensuring that these activities really engage young people and help them build knowledge, feel connected, and give back to the community. To ensure that your program is being effective in offering these kinds of opportunities, you need to include evaluation of community involvement efforts in your ongoing program assessment. Do young people report that they find community involvement projects meaningful and rewarding? How many connections

does your program have with other community organizations? How close are these connections? Also examine the quantity and quality of the relationships between young people in the program and community volunteers.

SNAPSHOT

Project Yield

Oakland, CA

"We encourage relationship building and promote community involvement together, in a really organic way, by building on relationships that already exist," says Nancy Netherland, Director of Community Programming.

For example, Project Yield hires neighbors and school volunteers as staff for the after-school program.

"We learned that there was a young woman living in the housing project across the street, and the kids liked to go over to her house after-school to learn dance steps. So we hired her for the program and connected her with a professional mentor to support her work. Her relationship with the young people was already established."

Youth Involvement

Community involvement activities are most powerful when they are meaningful to the young people who participate in them. Their involvement in planning and implementation ensures that projects will be relevant to them.

Community Engagement

Community involvement activities work best when the community is engaged with the after-school program at a deeper program or organizational level. For example, it is most helpful when stakeholders in the community are engaged in early planning and goal setting, and have on-going input. In this way, providing opportunities for community involvement can be an integral part of the program, and not an add-on.

Providing Opportunities for Community Involvement at all Levels of the Organization

Programs are most effective at linking young people and the community when the community is engaged at all levels of the organization. This means that all those involved in the program have knowledge of the community where they are located, have connections with the community, and have opportunities to give back to the community. This may mean giving staff members time to attend community meetings and events and involving parents, volunteers, and non-program staff in holding events for the community.

Five Things You Can Do NOW to Increase Community Involvement

1. **Invite a speaker from the community to come to your program.** This can be most effective when the topic is linked to something the students are studying in school, or to a project they are working on in the program. For example, if they are learning about the Civil Rights movement, you might invite neighbors who lived through those days to talk about what it was like. If they are studying butterflies, you might find a local entomologist to visit. Firefighters and other people with exciting jobs are always welcome speakers. Community colleges, museums, parks, volunteer centers, community centers, and even the phone book are all good places to start looking for speakers.

2. **Encourage parents, older siblings, and neighbors of the school to become involved in the program.** Parents can provide wonderful support for cultural activities. Members of the community might volunteer as tutors, mentors, or for snack preparation or story reading. Older siblings and recent program graduates can serve as tutors or helpers, and this can provide a link between the high schools and middle school-aged youth. These volunteers will require training and support, but the investment pays off in a decreased youth/adult ratio and in increased relationship building opportunities for the young people.

3. **Invite the community into your program to celebrate the talents of your young people.** Stage an open house or performance at your program space. Share young people's art, theater, dance, music, or other performance with the community. Publish a newsletter, 'zine, or collection of poetry. Invite parents and neighbors to see how your program works. This is one way to let your young people shine and give back to the community at the same time.

4. **Get out of the building!** Any time you leave familiar space you are allowing young people to expand their horizons. Take a field trip to a regional park or museum. Visit a local establishment, service, or branch of government to learn how it works. Attend a program or activity at a local non-profit organization such as the Red Cross, Sierra Club, a social justice or civil rights organization, or a local arts center or library. Practice using public transportation, and let young people help figure out how to get where you are going.

5. **Plan a project that will benefit the community.** Clean up or plant trees or flowers at a local park, speak out at a public forum on a youth or community issue, visit elders at the senior center, serve snacks at a neighborhood fair, design and paint a mural… the possibilities are endless! Try to match projects to the interests of the young people, and look for existing programs that can help you prepare young people for a meaningful experience.

"I love being able to help others and I love getting that empowering feeling. Excuse my cheesiness, but it's true."

—M.G., 14 years old, Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center, San Francisco, CA

Notes

CHAPTER 6

Sharing With Others: Presentation Materials and Exercises

Programs will be most effective at providing opportunities for community involvement when all stakeholders at an organization support it. The following are some tools for sharing with your staff or others at your agency or school to get everyone thinking about community involvement. You might want to read the section at the beginning of this chapter together and/or hand out some of the highlighted case studies. The following Personal Reflection Exercise is a good way to spark discussion. If there is a local youth serving agency with a particularly strong community involvement component, you may want to invite someone from that agency in as a guest speaker to offer inspiration and share his or her experience.

EXERCISE:

Personal Reflection: Community Involvement

This exercise is intended to help people identify what makes community involvement relevant. It is a good opening to focus the group on the importance of community involvement.

Begin by telling participants that you are going to do a personal reflection. Ask them to close their eyes, and spend a few minutes thinking about their own experience. Then read the following:

> Take a moment to think about a group or community where you feel you belong. It could be a geographic area, a cultural or ethnic group, a group that shares an activity or set of beliefs, or any other group that feels like a community to you.
>
> • Think of something you contributed to the community that had an impact on it.
>
> • Why did you contribute to that community?
>
> • What would happen if you were not there?
>
> • What makes it feel like community to you?

Group Discussion:

Before holding a group discussion you might want to give the participants an opportunity to write down some highlights of what they learned in the Personal Reflection Exercise. Then hold a discussion using the following questions to facilitate sharing and learning from each participant's experience.

- What are some of the things that you remembered about your own experience as you were reflecting?
- Why might it be important for young people to have a connection to community?
- How does this relate to the desired outcomes of an effective after-school program (learning to be productive, to be connected, to navigate)?
- What is the impact on young people when they don't have a positive connection to the community?

EXERCISE:

Introducing Our Communities

This is another useful exercise to get a group of adults or young people talking about what community means to them.

Materials needed:

- ☐ Instant camera and film
- ☐ Cutout stick figures of people in many colors, about 5" tall, one per person (make in advance of exercise)
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Fine-point markers

Ask the group to reflect silently on the following questions:

- What communities do you serve through your job?
- What communities do you identify with or feel a part of?
- What communities do the young people you work with come from?

After a few minutes to reflect, have the group get into pairs, preferably pairs who don't know each other well. Partners get a few minutes to talk about community and what it means to them, speaking in turns. Partners take instant pictures of each other's faces and attach the pictures of their faces to the paper figures. On the body of the stick person, they write down the words that define community for them and which they are willing to share with the rest of the group. When everyone is finished, partners go around the circle, introducing each other to the group. Afterwards, post the figures on the wall for everyone to see.

EXERCISE:

Brainstorm Opportunities for Community Involvement

Materials needed:

- ☐ Flip Chart
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Tape

Divide the participants into five groups for brainstorms. If you have different programs, age levels, or management levels represented, try to mix them up in your groups. Each group takes one topic to brainstorm. Topics are:

- Possible community partners (Include agencies that are members of your collaborative, agencies where your staff members have connections, agencies that may have areas of program overlap, community service agencies, and sources for individual volunteers.)
- Community service activities (Be sure to think of activities for younger as well as older children if you serve multiple age groups.)
- Young people's interests that could be connected to the community (i.e., A group interested in dance might enjoy a visit by a local dance troupe, which might lead to other activities.)
- Other community issues/programs/activities that might interest your young participants.
- Ways to let the broader community know who you are and what you do, so that you can strengthen your relationship with the community.

Remember, this is a brainstorm, so try not to rule anything out right away. Make your brainstorms as broad as possible. The idea is to get everyone thinking of your program as an integrated part of the community, with information and knowledge constantly flowing into and out of your program.

After the small groups have completed their brainstorms, step back and give everyone time to circulate around the room, looking at each other's charts. Make additions to other groups' charts. Circle topics that come up on several lists or seem especially promising.

Further Staff Training Topics for Community Involvement

- Specific training on cultures represented in the student population
- Volunteer management/appreciation
- Speaking to the media and generating publicity
- Young people as volunteers
- Specific topics related to potential projects
- Programs offered at school and by agencies in collaborative

Community Involvement: Checklist for Action

This checklist is meant to help you stay organized and focused as you begin increasing opportunities for community involvement in your after-school program.

Have you:

- ☐ Had a staff discussion about the importance of community involvement and how they view young people? Do they view young people as a community resource that can make a difference?
- ☐ Set aside staff time to thoroughly plan the incorporation of community involvement activities?
- ☐ Assessed the need for staff development and planned for training?
- ☐ Looked at how your school or agency allocates resources (time, space, and money) to support community involvement?
- ☐ Familiarized program staff with local culture(s) and communities, including the immediate neighborhood?
- ☐ Familiarized program staff with offerings of collaborating agencies and other community groups?
- ☐ Considered both opportunities for young people to be involved in the community and for the community to be involved with young people?
- ☐ Asked young people what they consider to be their community or communities?
- ☐ Gathered youth input and ideas about community involvement?
- ☐ Made connections with other local community groups?
- ☐ Checked that potential community service activities are grounded in a solid understanding of the issues you are addressing?
- ☐ Involved families in planning and implementation?
- ☐ Selected the most promising areas to begin community involvement?
- ☐ Defined specifically how you expect these activities to positively impact young people and the community?
- ☐ Trained someone on staff in volunteer management, if you are planning to use outside volunteers?
- ☐ Met with possible community partners, agreed on responsibilities, and outlined a plan? (It's a good idea to have this in writing.)
- ☐ Incorporated outcomes related to community involvement into program evaluation?

Creating Learning Experiences That Build Skills

7

Providing opportunities for young people to expand their skills and knowledge.

CHAPTER 7

What is Meant by Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences?

Learning experiences provide young people with opportunities to expand their understanding and knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live and to master specific new concepts and skills. These experiences are **challenging** when they require participants to stretch beyond their current range of knowledge and skills and offer opportunities to test and master their skills in the real world. You know that young people are being challenged when, upon succeeding, they express a genuine sense of pride and accomplishment, and a readiness to

share their learning with others. Learning experiences are **engaging** when they tap into the young participants' natural curiosity and interest in discovery, and when they serve to motivate, rather than discourage, their eagerness to try new activities.

How can you ensure that you are creating activities that tap into young people's natural desire to learn, giving them opportunities to stretch themselves and gain new knowledge and skills? To do this we must consciously integrate learning opportunities into the full range of activities we offer. And we must draw on all of the youth development practices discussed in this Guide. Promoting safety, building positive relationships, fostering meaningful youth participation and offering opportunities for community involvement are all part of creating successful learning environments.

Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences Mean that Young People:

- are motivated to learn because activities interest them.
- have the chance to stretch their skills, knowledge, and abilities.
- internalize a sense of mastery and competence.

Why is it Important that Learning Experiences are Challenging and Engaging?

To prepare young people for adulthood, we must provide them with multiple opportunities to broaden their knowledge of the world, develop new skills, and increase their competencies in a number of realms. We recognize that young people are around-the-clock learners, making the after-school hours a perfect time for youth to access rich and varied opportunities for new learning. Our challenge, as program leaders, is to create challenging and engaging learning experiences that will both attract and retain young peoples' participation, and support them in acquiring new skills.

When young people are both challenged and engaged, they become attentive and receptive to learning. When these learning opportunities are coupled with the support they need to succeed, their accomplishments take on an importance larger than the particular skill they have learned—these experiences contribute to their perceptions of themselves as able learners and promote an "I can do it" attitude. This internalized sense of competence and mastery serves to fuel their desire and motivation for future success and to assume active responsibility for their own learning.

Research also tells us that feelings of competence and access to engaging opportunities are critical factors in youth's avoidance of high risk behaviors, such as the use of alcohol and other drugs. As researchers James Connell and Michelle Gambone note, young people "are more likely to avoid these dangers if they have healthier options in their lives that contain the appropriate blend of challenge and accomplishment." [i]

"Whether in school, sports, arts, a job or other arenas, young people are engaged by, and benefit from, activities that give them a sense of competence and productivity."

—James Connell & Michelle Gambone, *Youth Development in Community Settings: A Community Action Framework*

Immediate Benefits

After-school programs that offer diverse and engaging learning opportunities allow young people to explore new subjects and disciplines, which they might not be able to explore elsewhere. For some, this will be a chance to showcase talents that were not previously seen or appreciated in other settings.

Providing learning experiences that both challenge and engage young people is also the best way to attract and sustain their participation in after-school programs. This is particularly true in the case of adolescents, who typically have a higher level of choice over their participation and can "vote with their feet" if they don't find programs engaging.

Using a range of approaches to reach young people with diverse learning styles will also help your program attract and sustain the participation of young people who have not had success in traditional classroom settings. As all participants feel more interested and successful as learners, their confidence, enthusiasm and interest in participating will grow and misbehavior will diminish.

How Do You Know If Your Program Is Providing Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences?

What You See

You can tell that a program has placed importance on creating challenging and interesting learning experiences for its participants when you walk into the room and see:

- Program materials selected based on the ages, abilities and backgrounds of the participants.
- Activities organized to include young people with a wide range of skills.
- Young people learning in groups and individually.
- Opportunities to learn academic and life skills through program activities that appeal to young people.
- Young people trying a variety of problem-solving strategies, including asking for help from adults and peers, when facing challenges in activities.
- Young people demonstrating new abilities and applying their skills to new tasks.
- The program draws on the talents of many different kinds of "teachers" who support the participants' learning: community workers, parents, older or "expert" peers, as well as classroom teachers.
- Young people receiving recognition for their accomplishments informally and through celebrations and performances.
- Young people receiving on-going feedback from adults and reflecting on their own progress; and young people regularly sharing *their* feedback on the program with program leaders, including whether or not they feel challenged by activities.

What Young People Say

The best way to assess whether young people are learning new skills and feel challenged and engaged in the process is to ask them. How would young people in your program respond to the statements below? Would they agree or disagree?

- I learn how to do new things here.
- The activities here are fun.
- I am learning things that I have a personal interest in.
- I get to do things here that I don't get to do anywhere else.
- I get to learn how to do things I did not think I could do.
- Staff here challenge me to do my best.
- I am getting better at doing things I care about.
- I am able to set my own goals around the things I learn here.

Reflection:

What are some things you see in your program that indicate challenging and engaging learning experiences are being offered? What are some things you would like to see?

SNAPSHOT

Community Bridges Beacon

San Francisco, CA

Urban ArtWorks is a program at this Beacon Center that uses ceramic mosaics as a way to express themes of youth power. Recently the young people in the program created a dramatic mosaic mural for the Mission District community. They decided to place it on one of the most popular locations in the Mission, the 16th Street Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Station. BART officials welcomed the idea, and helped the young people make it a reality.

Providing Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences

In the pages that follow, we describe some first steps in creating challenging and engaging learning experiences for young people. We begin with the importance of designing a learning environment that is experienced as safe for taking risks and incorporates both the diversity and interests of young learners. Next, we discuss the importance of embedding learning lessons in all program activities and drawing on instructional strategies that are especially designed to engage young people as full participants. Lastly, we focus on the importance of providing feedback to youth, opportunities for their own self-assessment, and ensuring that they are recognized and celebrated for their accomplishments.

Building a Safe and Learning Friendly Community

As described in Chapter 3, *Promoting A Sense of Safety*, young people must feel safe in order to take the risks necessary to learn new things. You can create an environment that supports learning by:

- building strong and trusting relationships with young people and fostering positive relationships between young people and their peers (see *Encouraging Relationship Building*);
- promoting the exploration of ideas and the practice of new skills—without censuring young people for their errors or mistakes;
- explicitly placing a high value on the search for answers, discovery and learning together, including asking for and giving help to others;
- being supportive and inclusive of participants' different learning styles and intelligences.

SNAPSHOT

Community Learning Center

South San Francisco, CA

The Community Learning Center provides 4th and 5th graders homework assistance and enrichment activities in a supportive environment filled with computers and reading material. The staff encourages the young people to help each other, in pairs or small groups. Kelli Pearson, the program director, noticed that two of the boys were having difficulty getting their work completed. " We made a temporary individual carrel for both of the boys so they won't have as much distraction. After that they would come in everyday and set up their desk, and get to work." By allowing and encouraging the young people to work in different spatial and group arrangements, the program staff provided the best learning environment for the participants.

SNAPSHOT

Bayview-Hunter's Point Community Beacon Center

San Francisco, CA

At the Beacon Center, a group of 20 children participate in a cooking class after-school where they learn how to prepare well-balanced meals while learning to compute fractions. They study the origins of their recipes, including geographic regions and cultures from which they come. Each month they focus on a different ethnic group. They are also addressing the issues of hunger in the community as they prepare and serve 60-100 dinners each evening to their peers, ages 5-16, who may have otherwise skipped dinner. "The best part of the class is that we get to cook stuff that we never cooked before or and stuff we never heard of, and sometimes we get to choose what we cook." SL, age12

Incorporating the Interests of Young People

Regardless of the teaching and learning methods you employ, it is important to incorporate young people's interests in your program. You may want to survey the young people in your program about their interests, and then work to incorporate opportunities to learn academic and life skills into activities that reflect these interests.

You can also build on learners' existing knowledge and skills. When introducing a new topic or project, begin by allowing young people to show what they already know. There may be some true "experts" among them. By building off the momentum of their knowledge and prior experiences, you can help them both test and deepen their present understanding. Equally as important to designing programs with young people's interests in mind, is ensuring that programs are relevant to the learners.

It is crucial that staff understand young people's *life contexts*, including their cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and have the flexibility to design programs that are relevant to participants. Hiring workers from the community, involving community volunteers and parents, and drawing on their expertise will help you shape a more sensitive and effective program.

Getting To Know the Young People In Your Program

Promoting successful learning experiences begins with focusing on the ***learners***—their interests, needs, and abilities—then incorporating this knowledge into decisions about how best to engage them in activities that will achieve the learning goals of the program.

Choosing learning strategies and activities that are age appropriate based on young people's needs and interests and their stage of development is an important component of creating challenging and engaging learning environments. Take time in a staff meeting to consider the young people's stage of development and varied learning styles, and the implications for your program. Failing to take young people's developmental level into account when designing activities can lead to experiences of boredom or failure, which can undermine their confidence in their own learning abilities.

This chart is adapted from "Child Developmental Stages and Ages" from the WNET SCHOOL website (www.thirteen.org/wnetschool/concept2class/month11/characteristics.html)

Ages 6 — 10	Ages 11 to 14
Children's Ways They begin to apply logic to solving problems, and get good at using numbers, letters, and words. **Adult Roless** Adults should provide children with lots of guidance and opportunities to solve problems; find games that use numbers, letters, and words.	**Children's Ways** May begin to show skills in certain content and ability areas. **Adult Roles** Adults should encourage youth to try lots of experiences in different areas.
Children's Ways Having and keeping friends becomes very important. **Adult Roles** Adults encourage friends to sit together, play together, have snack together, and work at resolving issues that threaten relationships.	**Children's Ways** Begin to develop more personal self-awareness concerning the physical, social and emotional changes that are rapidly occurring to them. **Adult Roles** Adults need to be sensitive and patient as youth deal with these issues.
Children's Ways Kids enjoy math if it's connected to and supports what they are invested in. **Adult Roles** Adults should use games, cooking activities, and problem solving to reinforce school-learned skills.	**Children's Ways** Youth really want to talk to adults, but don't always know how. **Adult Roles** Adults who are skilled listeners are highly prized by youth. Practice developing good listening skills by listening more than speaking.
Children's Ways Children learn new things and need to constantly replace old ways of thinking with new ways. Leaving the familiar for the new untried ways is difficult for some. **Adult Roles** Adults can help kids recall how successful they have been in the past during unfamiliar experiences, and how normal it is to be unsure about alternative ways of thinking about something.	**Children's Ways** Youth have a strong desire for independence, especially from the constraints that are more typical of "little kids." Older youth enjoy relationships with caring adults. **Adult Roles** This doesn't mean you eliminate rules. Have rules that match older youths' abilities to be responsible.

SNAPSHOT

Community Counts

"One year a basketball team had six-week units of study on the following topics: finances of the National Basketball Association, physics in the sport of basketball, and neurophysiology. Each of these units included original research, problem sets, discussion of ethics, and decision-making. For example, the unit on the NBA covered costs of health insurance, uniforms, travel, income from ticket sales, taxes on players' salaries, and using probability theory to illustrate the youngsters' chances of making it to the NBA. The neurophysiology unit discussed steroids, heart rate under exertion and under heat dehydration, and myths surrounding 'chocolate highs' and 'carbohydrate loading.'"

Learning Styles and Intelligences:

In order to connect with a variety of learners in your after-school program you will need to be knowledgeable about the different ways people learn. This is crucial when planning skill building activities. Some people are *visual learners*, learning best from reading books, written instructions, and visual demonstrations. Others are *auditory learners*, processing information best from oral explanations. And still other people are *kinesthetic learners*, learning best from physical experience. Most of us learn best through a combination of these approaches, and from repeated encounters.

According to Howard Gardner and other scientists, there are nine distinct forms of intelligence, which each individual possesses in varying degrees. Tribes TLC® offers a useful discussion of the different intelligences and examples of activities that support their development.

Tribes TLC® offers a useful discussion of different intelligences broken down into nine categories.

As you understand these concepts more fully, you can design activities that draw on the many different kinds of intelligences and talents of your young people in different areas. By doing this you can challenge and engage a diverse range of young people and create opportunities for each to shine. (For more information on multiple intelligences see **http://www.thirteen.org/wnetschool/concept2class/month5/implement_sub1.html** in the *Resources* Section at the end of this Guide.)

Integrating Learning Into All Activities

Researcher Milbrey McLaughlin has spent over a decade studying community-based youth programs. McLaughlin found that youth programs which are highly effective tend to create environments where young people are almost always "engaged in activities that deliberately teach a number of lessons…and build a range of academic competencies and life skills." [ii]

In many cases, leaders of these programs built on already existing programs that had captured the interest of young people and expanded learning activities to include other content areas. McLaughlin cites examples of an arts program that asks young people to research their cultural history and then work together to create a mural expressing the themes they discovered; a dance class where participants keep journals and begin rehearsals by reading aloud from their writings; and sports programs that incorporate lessons on personal responsibility and teamwork [iii].

To maximize learning in your after-school program, begin by intentionally integrating multiple learning opportunities into all programs and activities and setting learning goals for each. As you plan each activity, identify how you will

Nine Intelligences

The work of Howard Gardner and other scientists has identified nine intelligences that are common to all human beings and that vary in degree in each person. The multiple intelligences, ways of learning and knowing, are as follows:

Verbal/Linguistic

Thinks and learns through written and spoken words; has the ability to memorize facts, fill in work books, take written tests, and enjoy reading.

Logical/Mathematical

Thinks deductively; deals with numbers and recognizes abstract patterns.

Visual/Spatial

Thinks in and visualizes images and pictures; has the ability to create graphic designs and communicate with diagrams and graphics.

Body/Kinesthetic

Learns through physical movement and body wisdom; has a sense of knowing through body memory.

Musical/Rhythmic

Recognizes tonal patterns and environmental sounds; learns through rhyme, rhythm and repetition.

Interpersonal

Learns and operates one-to-one, through group relationships and communication; also depends on all of the other intelligences.

Intrapersonal

Enjoys and learns through self-reflection, metacognition, working alone; has an awareness of inner spiritual relities.

Existential

Is concerned with ultimate life issues—love, death, philosophy; Learns in context with meaning.

Naturalist

Loves nature and the out-of-doors; Enjoys classifying species—flora and fauna

Permission to use granted by Jeanne Gibbs, author of *Tribes: A New Way of Learning and Being Together*, CenterSource Systems, Sausalito, CA.

For cooperative groups to be effective, members should engage in teambuilding activities and other tasks that deal explicitly with the development of social skills needed for effective teamwork.

California Department of Education Website: Cooperative Learning Response to Diversity (www.cde.ca.gov/iasa/cooplrng)

weave opportunities for learning into the activity and identify the specific strategies you will use to help young people meet the learning goals.

Allow enough time for staff to plan interesting and meaningful learning experiences that incorporate a variety of learning styles and intelligences. It is often a good idea to try out a new activity on a smaller group of youth, and ask for their feedback. Staff should also have opportunities to discuss what skills and knowledge they believe youth in the program need and together determine how these skills can be incorporated across all program activities. Some of the exercises at the end of this chapter may be useful in beginning this discussion. Ultimately, youth, parents, and community members should also be included in this planning.

SNAPSHOT

Buck Institute of Education

San Anselmo, CA

A fourth-and fifth-grade project at Brookside School in San Anselmo, CA was originally launched to seek ways to preserve the habitat of endangered, local freshwater shrimp. This project has become an active and influential after-school and weekend project known as The Shrimp Club. The Club is run entirely by students. Club members have testified at the state level, secured grant moneys to conduct field work, and developed a newsletter which has a wide circulation in the larger community.

Instructional Strategies that Engage Young People

After-school programs can draw on a number of instructional strategies and learning models from the field of education that serve to actively engage learners. Both cooperative learning and project based-learning provide opportunities for young people to be engaged, to work and learn together, and to spend time not only learning new things, but acquiring a better understanding of how they learn. (For more information, see Chapter 5, *Fostering Meaningful Youth Participation*.)

Cooperative Learning

Young people's learning in school is typically structured by each working individually or in competition with one another. After-school settings, however, offer the flexibility for young people to learn in alternative ways. Cooperative learning is an instructional method in which young people work together in small teams to promote their own learning as well as the learning of their peers; and where students perceive that they can reach their learning goals if and only if the other students in the learning group also reach their goals.

Cooperative learning has been shown to be a highly effective way for young people to achieve their learning goals. They are able to engage with a diverse group of participants with different views, backgrounds, ideas and questions providing rich learning opportunities. According to the California Department of Education and others, cooperative learning is also viewed as a "powerful educational approach for helping all students attain content standards and develop the interpersonal skills needed for succeeding in a multicultural world." [iv]

Program leaders may engage young people in cooperative learning for moments at a time to share their thoughts and experiences or participate in a group decision. Cooperative learning can also be more formalized, lasting for an entire activity period or for several weeks. In an after-school setting, young people can engage in cooperative learning groups to complete homework, make group decisions or do problem solving, research the answers to questions, conduct a survey or experiment, or complete complex projects together. (For more information on group projects, see Project-Based Learning, below.).

It is important to note, however, that cooperative learning requires that the group members are able to engage in activities in a teamwork setting. Also important are establishing an environment where participants feel safe, but challenged and keeping the groups small enough so that all can contribute. "Social skills for effective cooperative work do not magically appear when cooperative lessons are employed. Instead, social skills must be taught to students just as purposefully and precisely as academic skills. Leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills empower students to manage both teamwork and taskwork successfully." [v] (For a more thorough overview of cooperative learning, group lessons and implementation strategies see the Resources section at the end of this Guide.)

Compared with other approaches, cooperation, has been found to result in: (a) higher achievement and greater productivity, (b) more caring, supportive, and committed relationships, and (c) greater psychological health, social competence, and self-esteem.

The Cooperative Learning Center of the University of Minnesota: www.clcrc.com

Cooperative learing provides a place where:

- learners actively participate;
- teachers become learners at times, and learners sometimes teach;
- respect is given to every member;
- projects and questions interest and challenge students;
- diversity is celebrated, and all contributions are valued;
- students learn skills for resolving conflicts when they arise;
- members draw upon their past experience and knowledge;
- goals are clearly identified and used as a guide;
- research tools such as Internet access are made available;
- students are invested in their own learning.

From the WNET website: http://www.thirteen.org/wnetschool/concept2class/month5/index.html

"What can quality after-school programs do to encourage learning, while not creating an overly academic climate? The answer lies in part in project-based activities, activities that stand between play and academics and combine the best of both."

David Alexander: The Learning That Lies Between Play and Academics in After-School Programs

Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Project-Based Learning is a teaching and learning method that actively engages the participation and excitement of young people, and is well suited to after-school settings. In project-based learning, young people work collaboratively over a period of time to investigate a topic area, focus on the development of a product or performance, or solve a problem related to real world issues. In tackling their projects, young people are provided with a guiding framework in which to work, but also the freedom to organize the process and activities necessary to reach a solution. This usually involves their organizing their activities, conducting research, solving problems, and synthesizing information across disciplines.

Project-based learning requires that young people have strong communication and teamwork skills, and are able to consider different points of view, and make decisions without conflict. It also requires sound planning on the part of program leaders. (For information about incorporating project based learning strategies into your program, see the Resources section at the end of this guide.)

Project-Based Learning Benefits Described by Students

The following statements are paraphrased from those voiced by elementary and middle-school students in the Ross Valley School District.

- We got to choose what to work on.
- We learned that we can make a difference.
- There was a clear goal that was a challenge to work on.
- There was an audience for the product and we knew we had to meet the deadline and present it to the audience.
- We weren't afraid to try things we didn't know because the teacher said we could do things over until we got it right.
- Everyone felt needed and had a part. Nobody got left out.
- We didn't need to use our texts, and we were actively doing things and learning something.
- We were using skills we knew we would need in our jobs, like using time wisely, exercising responsibility, and not letting the group down.
- We learned that when the real world is the source of evaluation, you had better have your act together.

You can solicit ideas for projects through "brainstorming" activities with program participants or build off of earlier projects and interests. When selecting project ideas, keep in mind that the topic should be closely related to a young person's everyday experiences or interests, so that they will be able to raise relevant questions and therefore actively engage with the subject matter. Project-based learning in after-school settings can also promote a link with formal learning topics during the school day. Leaders should anticipate requests by participants to gather information or materials outside of the program facilities. Project-based learning offers great opportunities to connect with the greater community.

"[In project-based learning] students have the opportunity to practice and develop their ability to function in complex thinking environments that reflect the type of work environments they will encounter in the twenty-first century."

CORD Website:
http://www.cord.org/lev2.cfm/65

At the conclusion of a project, participants will often develop a group report, exhibition or performance, which will serve to motivate participants to achieve a high quality product, and offers them an opportunity for recognition and celebration.

Connecting School Day Learning to After-School Activities

Increasingly, after-school program leaders are being asked to support school day learning. This can be accomplished without loosing your "youth friendly" after-school environment or duplicating the learning methods of traditional classrooms. Begin by becoming knowledgeable about the curriculum content that will be covered in the classrooms of your participants. Are there themes, projects or activities you can incorporate to enrich young people's interest and understanding of their classroom content? Teachers are wonderful resources for brainstorming ideas and program planning resources and materials.

> *"I think it's important that we pay attention to ways that we can support learning that's going on in the academic classrooms and bring it over to the after-school environment. It's important though that we do it well and that we do it in a way that makes sense for after-school programs. We have to remember that after-school programs are different than traditional classroom environments. They are more informal, they are more relaxed, they build on kids' interest. Often, the curriculum is project based and experiential and there are a lot of hands-on fun things that happen. But at the same time, they can support and build on the learning standards that are going on during the academic day."* [vi]

Published academic standards are also a great resource to help you incorporate classroom learning with after-school learning goals. Each school district and state department of education publishes standards that describe the destinations at which students should arrive at the end of a unit or term in reading, writing, math, fine arts, performing arts, fitness, and many other areas. (For an introduction to academic standards and a listing of other resources, see www.thirteen.org/wnetschool/concept2class/month3/ and the Resources sec-

tion at the end of this guide.) Not only will your knowledge of these standards provide ideas on how to enrich your program activities, but they will provide you with a common language and framework that school day personnel will understand as you describe and promote your program.

Providing Opportunities for Assessment, Feedback and Recognition

Young people are intrinsically invested in making progress and achieving their goals. Program leaders can support young people's learning by establishing program learning objectives in advance of activities and helping young people to set their own personal learning objectives. Young people then need opportunities to measure their own progress and refine and improve their work, as well as receive on-going feedback from adults and recognition for their accomplishments.

Assessment and feedback can take a variety of forms, including:

- informal coaching and feedback between young people and adults;
- on-going structured opportunities where young people write about or describe their view of their own progress;
- the use of individual portfolios that demonstrate improvement over time;
- peer review and group reflections on joint projects. [vii]

Opportunities for public recognition are also vital to building young people's sense of confidence and accomplishment. These might include youth presentations, public celebrations of accomplishments, and events and performances that showcase the new skills and talents that young people have gained through their experiences in the program.

Remember that the ability of young people to accept and make use of candid feedback from adults and peers is dependent on the trust and sense of safety young people feel in the program and the explicit value program leaders place on learning and self-improvement.

Taking Advantage of the Strengths of After-School Programs

After-school programs have some unique features that make them different from school settings. By focusing on these characteristics, we can "play to our strengths" in designing our programs to be rich learning environments that also support young people's healthy development.

As we design our programs, we need to bear these features in mind so that we can take advantage of the unique opportunities that after-school settings offer, and use these strengths to compliment and expand on what goes on in the classroom, not merely replicate it.

The Unique Features of After-School Programs

- **Individual Relationships:** after-school program leaders have the opportunity to work individually with young people, get to know them, and gain a better understanding of the circumstances of their lives. They may also have the opportunity to maintain longer-term relationships with young people as they often work with their participants over longer periods of time.
- **Participant Choice:** Young people choose to participate in after-school programs. To attract participants programs must necessarily engage young people's interests.
- **Community Connections:** After-school programs have opportunities to make connections with young people's families and communities. They can extend learning into the community to help young people link their in-school learning with what they see happening in the world around them.
- **Flexibility:** After-school settings have a much greater degree of flexibility in terms of time and scheduling, program content, and the set up of the physical space. Young people's interests can drive the focus of activities, which will lead to greater participant engagement. Length of activities can vary as needed, which also allows for a greater diversity of activities. Young people can participate in creating a physical space where they feel comfortable and included.

"I worked with the music group and he had told us we could set up a mini recording studio for one day if we wanted to and he knew somebody who had equipment we could borrow...He taught us how to use the mixing board and make recordings and all kinds of stuff. That was really good for me personally because one of my career choices might be to be a producer engineer and I need to know how to use all that stuff."

L.M., 14 years old, The HOME Project, Alameda, CA

Organizational Practices that Support Skill Building Through Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences

Low Youth to Staff/Volunteer Ratio

The more staff and volunteers in the room, the more learning experiences can be tailored to the needs of individual learners. Low ratios of youth to adults are also vital to promoting a sense of safety and encouraging relationship building, both of which are crucial prerequisites to high-quality learning.

Safe, Reliable, and Accessible Activities and Spaces

It is not unusual for after-school programs to be assigned meeting spaces that are inadequate, due to surrounding noise or distractions, the lack of table space or running water, or other problems. To prevent frustration on the part of all parties, ensure that your meeting space supports the learning objectives and activities you have planned. If it doesn't, consider reorganizing your activities where possible and/or having your organizational leader negotiate for better space. Young people, especially adolescents who are going to be practicing new skills, often prefer spaces that offer some privacy from peers who may not be part of their program.

Range of Diverse, Interesting Learning Activities

When there are many opportunities to engage in different areas of learning, young people can focus on the learning that seems most relevant to them, and on modes of learning that work best for them. Like adults, they are most likely to take on the work and the risk of learning a new skill when it is interesting and when they feel it will help them in their lives.

Flexibility in Allocating Resources

The more flexibility your program has in allocating resources, the more you will be able to take advantage of unexpected teaching and learning opportunities when they arise. Could your staff and program change the focus of activities for five minutes, one day, or the rest of the year if young people's interests or needs indicated that this would increase learning within your program?

Continuity and Consistency of Care

It takes time to become familiar with the learning style of an individual, and to develop the trust necessary to foster learning. It is helpful to remember that, unfortunately, many young people have had negative experiences with adults in teaching roles who have not supported their learning. Once a young person has had a successful learning experience with an adult, she is more likely to give that person his best effort in the future. It is important for that adult to remain available consistently for that young person. Organizational leaders and program staff need to consider how to implement practices and policies that support the recruitment and retention of qualified staff and volunteers.

High, Clear, and Fair Standards

Once young people have had success as learners, it is important to keep inspiring them to grow in their skills. When we lay out standards clearly, young people can see their intermediate successes on the way to larger goals. Success can also be defined in terms of individual growth, rather than adopting one standard against which all are measured. Many programs use individual goal-setting as a way to help young people measure their own progress.

Ongoing, Results-based Staff and Organizational Improvement Process

This means that people at all levels of the organization—program staff, volunteers, administrators—have opportunities to learn, plan and practice skills before working with young people. It also means that there are regular and frequent opportunities for feedback and recognition of success at all levels with the goal of continually making the program better.

Providing Opportunities for Learning at All Levels of the Organization

When the entire agency is a learning community, everyone is engaged in a process of setting goals, learning skills, and evaluating progress. Learning becomes a fully integrated part of programming. Additionally, when program leaders view themselves as learners and learning as a constant process, they model lifelong learning for young people. In particular, it is important for organizations to provide staff with opportunities for on-going training to strengthen their teaching skills.

Five Things You Can Do NOW to Create Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences

1. Create a safe place to learn.

What makes a program a safe place to learn? Who better to ask than your young participants? What do the young people you work with think about mistakes? To get discussion started, read a book on famous mistakes that resulted in amazing inventions. Using this information, develop agreements and rules with the young people in your group to ensure the right of safety. Decide together what to do when agreements are broken. Post any agreements on the wall and refer to them often. And what about program staff? How do they respond to young people when mistakes are made? Consider how you can establish a program "culture" where everyone's mistakes are seen as opportunities for new learning and the process of inquiry and discovery is more important than always having the correct answers.

2. Plan for the skills and knowledge you want your participants to acquire in your program.

Often when planning programs, staff people go straight to lining up activities to fill a determined stretch of time, without thinking through what the learning goals are for a project or the overall program. Instead of identifying activities, work with staff to determine what kinds of knowledge and skills you want your young people to acquire over time through their participation in your program. They might be academic skills, study skills, leadership or team skills. Now, consider what kinds of experiences and activities you can provide over time that will meet your learning agenda. Don't feel like you have to do it alone! You can use or adapt curriculum materials to align with your participants' interests and needs, and draw on teachers and others around you who may have more experience in planning against learning outcomes.

3. Use portfolios to help participants reflect on their progress and accomplishments.

If your participants have consistent enrollment over time or if participants engage in long term projects where they increase their skills ongoing, consider how you might collect their work over time. You can create a portfolio or personal file with your young participants to

serve as an on-going record of their work. After several months or at the end of a project sit down with them to review their record of accomplishments. What do they think about it? What does their portfolio reflect back to them?

What kinds of records can be stored? For younger children, it might be a portfolio of self portraits that were done monthly, or simply their own file they use over time to store things they have done that they are proud of. For older youth who might be developing a set of skills over time, say in the arts or technology, communicate your project learning goals and ask them to develop personal learning goals, if appropriate. Assist them in assessing which goals they have met over time.

4. Increase independent access to diverse learning materials.

Within your program, provide access to learning materials that young people can independently access. This allows young people to pursue their own interests or engage in their own inquiry without the need for adult-led structure, and is perfect for young people who finish their work ahead of schedule or who want to disengage for a period of time from group activities. These may take the form of reading materials (books, magazines) or websites that are related to their interests or topics of study within your program. They can also be in the form of learning kits that have instructions and experiments with which they can involve themselves.

It is important that the materials are diverse and representative of the culture, gender, and abilities of your young people. (For websites that offer a list of multicultural reading materials for young people, see the Resources section at the end of this guide.)

5. Recognize the accomplishments of your young people.

Put in place opportunities for young people to be recognized for their accomplishments by others outside of the program. This can take place through performances, exhibits/presentations of completed projects, or celebrations where each child is acknowledged for his or her special accomplishments and contributions.

Sharing accomplishments with outsiders raises everyone's sense of accountability for deadlines and excellence. After a successful event, the positive effect on a group's sense of community and the individuals' experience of accomplishment can be quite profound.

Notes

CHAPTER 7

Sharing With Others: Presentation Materials and Exercises

Successfully integrating challenging and engaging learning experiences for young people across all program activities requires all program stakeholders to think about how to foster learning. Following are some tools for sharing with your staff and others at your after-school program to get everyone thinking about skill building and what it takes to create learning experiences. The Personal Reflection exercise below is a good way to spark discussion. If there is a local youth agency that is known for successfully promoting learning through their programs, you may want to invite someone from that agency as a guest speaker to offer inspiration and share his or her experience.

EXERCISE:

Personal Reflection

This exercise is intended to help program staff think about what goes into a high quality learning experience. It can serve as a good opening to focus the group on the importance of learning in an after-school context.

Begin by telling participants that you are going to do a personal reflection. Ask them to close their eyes. Read the following aloud:

> Take a moment to think about an engaging learning experience you have had—a time when you were fully involved in what you were doing and the rest of the world seemed to fall away. Think about what you were learning, who was there, and how you felt.

- What do you think led you to be so deeply engaged in this experience?
- What was interesting to you about what you were learning?
- How did you become interested in what you were learning?
- Were you in a group or alone? Did you have a teacher? What was his/her style?
- If you had a teacher, did you trust that person? Why did you trust or not trust that person?
- What modes of learning were you using (visual, auditory, physical)?
- What else stands out for you about the experience?

Group Discussion: Before holding a group discussion you might want to give the participants an opportunity to write down some highlights of what they learned in the Personal Reflection Exercise. Then hold a discussion using the following questions to facilitate sharing and learning from each participant's experience.

- Why might it be important for young people to have challenging and engaging learning opportunities out of school?
- Why might it be important to account for different styles and modes of learning?
- How does this relate to the outcomes of your after-school program?
- What is the impact on young people when they don't have engaging learning opportunities out of school?

EXERCISE;

Brainstorm for Integrating Learning Opportunities

This exercise is intended to help staff understand how to make learning more intentional in your program, and to begin developing program goals that are related to creating challenging and engaging learning experiences that build skills. Once staff have begun to understand how program activities provide young people with learning experiences, they will be able to talk with parents, funders, and community members about the important role non-academic programming can play in fostering learning.

Materials needed:

- ☐ Flip chart
- ☐ Markers

As a group, brainstorm for five minutes about the most fundamental things young people in your program need to know in order to lead happy and productive lives. Label these "Learning Goals." Try to be specific: If you think that young people need to learn "responsibility," does this mean cleaning up after themselves, time management, money management, or all of the above? Don't try to come up with a complete list, just a broad list of the different kinds of things young people need to learn.

Post the brainstormed list on the wall and then choose one of your program activities to highlight in a group brainstorming session. For example, homework club, athletic programs or a cooking class. For five minutes, ask group members to try to list all of the things that a young person can learn through the selected activity. If the activity chosen is designed to teach a specific skill or concept, think beyond it to the other lessons and skills young people can learn through the activity. For example, if the activity is a sport, what might the activity teach young people beyond the particular rules of the game and the physical skills required? Label these "Learning Opportunities."

Group discussion: Compare the two lists. Is there overlap? Are there ways that the activity could be structured to help young people learn more of the things on your "Learning Goals" list? Are there "additional learning opportunities available in the activity that you could highlight or reinforce more effectively? How? What signs would indicate that young people are learning these lessons through this activity? Can you build time into the activity for young people to plan, practice and perform these skills? Is there time for young people to reflect, receive feedback, and be recognized for their accomplishments?

EXERCISE:

Practice Teaching

This exercise offers a chance for staff working in your after-school program to learn new teaching strategies from each other and to get feedback on their teaching styles.

Materials needed:

☐ Handout: Multiple Intelligences Idea Chart (pge 147)

Break into teams of two or three. Give each team 15 minutes to plan a three-minute lesson for the rest of the group. It doesn't matter what they are teaching—it can be something simple or silly like the words to a new song or how to pass notes without being caught. You can even teach something the group already knows, such as how a seed grows into a plant or how to cross the street safely. Try to create your lesson so that it addresses a range of learning styles and intelligences.

After each lesson take time for group feedback. What worked well about the lesson? What learning styles and intelligences were addressed? (Unless the group has developed a high level of trust, focus only on positive comments). If there had been more time, how could you have engaged other learning styles and intelligences in this lesson?

Variations:

1. If you don't have time for the entire group to present, have one team present at each of several meetings.

2. If a staff member has had a particularly successful teaching experience with the young person, have them present that lesson to the entire group, and analyze what made it work.

3. Do a practice lesson in which participants are unable to use their eyes, ears, hands, or voices, etc. to force the "teacher" to consider how to reach them through other means.

Further staff training topics:

- Creating a lesson plan
- Engaging multiple intelligences and learning styles
- Cooperative learning strategies
- Project based learning strategies
- Teaching literacy and math skills
- Training in specific skills to share with young people

Learning Experiences: Checklist for Action

Now you are ready to start increasing the learning opportunities in your program! This checklist is meant to help you stay organized and focused. Using it will help you ensure the success of your program.

Have You:

- ☐ Set aside staff time to thoroughly plan how to integrate challenging and engaging learning experiences into your program?
- ☐ Learned about different learning styles and how to teach in a variety of ways?
- ☐ Asked the young people what they want to learn, what their interests are, and what they think young people in their particular age group need to know?
- ☐ Learned about the cultural backgrounds of the young people in your program and about their daily lives outside of the program?
- ☐ Learned about the developmental needs of the age group(s) your program serves?
- ☐ Assessed the different learning styles of your group, and discovered what they are already doing in the classroom?
- ☐ Looked for ways to intentionally embed learning opportunities into your program activities?
- ☐ Included learning goals in your program goals and outcomes?
- ☐ Considered ways to include cycles of planning, practicing and performing in different program activities?
- ☐ Established opportunities for young people to reflect and assess their own progress in activities?
- ☐ Discussed your challenges with co-workers and classroom teachers?
- ☐ Incorporated ongoing evaluation of the extent to which program activities offer challenging and engaging learning experiences and their outcomes?

Resources

About Resources

In this section we have listed readings, websites, publications and technical assistance agencies that provide more information on the field of youth development and the practices described in this guide. The resources are arranged by chapter, with two General Resources sections at the beginning, one about After School Programming and the other about Child and Youth Development. Each section is comprised of two groups: Readings, and Web Sites, Publications and Technical Assistance Agencies.

CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

General Readings About After-School Programming

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.
"When School is Out." *The Future of Children*. No. 2, Vol. 9, Fall 1999.
www.futureofchildren.org

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Safe Havens: The Contributions of Youth Organizations to Healthy Adolescent Development. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures, April 1997.
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Available in English and Spanish.

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Schools Our Children Deserve: Moving Beyond Traditional Classrooms and "Tougher Standards." Mariner Books, 2000.

McLaughlin, Milbrey W.
Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development. Washington D.C.: Public Education Network, April 2000.
www.PublicEducation.org

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Urban Sanctuaries: Neighborhood Organizations in the Lives and Futures of Inner-City Youth. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1994.

Olsen, Laurie, and Amy Scharf.
"Realizing the Promise and Opportunity of After School Programs in a Diverse State: A Preliminary Analysis of Equity and Access Issues in California's After School Programs; A joint working paper of California Tomorrow and The Foundation Consortium, #1." Oakland, CA: California Tomorrow, 2000.
www.californiatomorrow.org

Pittman, Karen J.
Promoting Youth Development: Strengthening the Role of Youth-Serving and Community Organizations. Washington, DC: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Educational Development, 1991.
To order a copy, call (202) 884-8267.

Scharf, Amy, and Laura Woodlief.
"Moving Toward Equity and Access in After School Programs: A Review of the Literature; A California Tomorrow Working Paper, #2." Oakland, CA: California Tomorrow, 2000.
www.californiatomorrow.org

Study Circles Resource Center.
Building Strong Neighborhoods: A Study Circle Guide for Public Dialogue and Community Problem Solving. Pomfret, CT: Study Circles Resource Center, 1998.
This guide helps communities to organize study circles — small-group, democratic, peer-led discussions on such topics as: schools, young people, families, jobs and the neighborhood economy. It also offers facilitation tips and guidelines for moving to action. To order a copy, call (860) 928-2616 or visit www.studycircles.org.

Walter, Katie E., Judith G. Caplan, and Carol K. McElvain.
Beyond the Bell: A Toolkit for Creating Effective After-school Programs. Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2000.
www.ncrel.org/after/bellkit.pdf
This toolkit offers a range of useful after-school planning resources, including materials that address staff retention.

Web Sites, Publications and Technical Assistance Agencies:

After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program
www.cde.ca.gov/afterschool

After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program
University of California, Irvine
Department of Education
www.gse.uci.edu/afterschool/ca
This site is a companion web site for the California After School CD-ROM. It provides after school training and resource materials, including text, web, technology, and multimedia resources.

California Collaborative After-School/School-Age Project
www.gsc.uci.cdu/schoolage/index.html
This website offers lists of resources for after-school programs, information on training and technical assistance opportunities, a chat/bulletin board and more, all aimed at local after-school programs.

California Department of Education

www.cde.ca.gov

This site offers general technical assistance and information on a wide variety of topics, including specific information about After-School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program, funding opportunities, publications, academic information, and legal information.

CenterSource Systems, LLC
7975 Cameron Drive, Suite 500
Windsor, California 95492
(707) 838-1061; Fax: (707) 838-1062

centrsrc@tribes.com

www.tribes.com

[Tribes TLC® A New Way of Learning and Being Together] blends the fields of group process and cooperative learning; prevention and resiliency; learning theory and school change into a comprehensive meaningful whole.

Foundation Consortium

www.foundationconsortium.org

The Foundation Consortium is an alliance of corporate, private, community and family foundations that share a common vision of improving the well being of California's children, families and communities by making the "Community Approach" the standard for child and family support programs throughout the state.

General Readings About Child and Youth Development

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.
A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours.
New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York, December 1992.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.
Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century.
New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York, June 1989.

Montessori, Maria.
The Absorbent Mind. Henry Holt, 1995.
This book focuses specifically on younger children.

Montessori, Maria.
Discovery of the Child. Ballantine Books, 1996.

Montessori, Maria.
From Childhood to Adolescence. Buccaneer Books, 1995.

Montessori, Maria.
The Secret of Childhood. Ballantine Books, 1992.

Pittman, Karen J. and Cahill, Michelle.
A New Vision: Promoting Youth Development. Washington, DC: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Educational Development, 1991.
To order a copy, call (202) 884-8267.

Public/Private Ventures.
Youth Development: Issues, Challenges and Directions. Philadelphia, PA: Public/PrivateVentures.
To order a copy, visit www.ppv.org
This publication examines the state of the emerging youth development field, lays out key challenges it faces, and suggests directions to advance its growth and effectiveness.

Web Sites, Publications and Technical Assistance Agencies:

Dr. Andi Fletcher
CDE/Foundation Consortium Partnership Intermediary
1325 Howe Avenue, Suite 210
Sacramento, CA 95825
(916) 428-6600 or
DrAndiASp@aol.com

Representing the CDE/Foundation Consortium public-private partnership, the Intermediary is responsible for assisting in the development of statewide and regional capacity to support after school programs and sites, and for providing mentoring, coaching and support to after school programs, sites and communities.

California Healthy Kids Survey
www.wested.org/hks

This site provides a comprehensive youth health and risk behavior survey and support system for school districts. It is focused on assessing drug use and violence, and is a companion to the California Department of Education's *Getting Results* guidebook.

Carnegie Corporation: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century
www.carnegie.org
www.carnegie.org/sub/pubs/reports/great_transitions/gr_intro.html

Center for Adolescent Studies
www.education.indiana.edi/cas/

Connell, James P., Michelle Alberti Gambone, and Thomas J. Smith. *Youth Development in Community Settings: Challenges to Out Field and Out Approach*. Toms River, NJ: Community Action for Youth Project.
To order a copy, contact **jnevin@irre.org**.
This reading can also be found in *Youth Development: Issues, Challenges, and Directions* (see Public/Private Ventures below).

CYD Journal, Community Youth Development
www.cydjournal.org

CYD Journal is a quarterly publication that promotes youth and adults working together in partnership to create, just, safe, and healthy communities by building leadership and influencing public policy.

Friday Night Live
www.fridaynightlive.org

Friday Night Live builds partnerships for positive and healthy youth development which engage youth as active leaders and resources in their communities. The web site was created as an outlet for youth to express their ideas and thoughts, to share stories, pictures, poems, and to let the world know about their lives.

National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST)
Center for Research on Women
Wellesley College
Wellesley, MA 02481
(781) 283-2547
www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC
NIOST is a resource for research information, publications, fact sheets, technical assistance opportunities and more.

National Youth Development Information Center
www.nydic.org

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
Rural Education Program
101 SW Main, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204
(503) 275-9500
www.nwrel.org/nwreport
This program offers guidance in planning and evaluation.

Public/Private Ventures
www.ppv.org
This site provides a list of research reports, books, and publications related to youth development, along with ordering information.

Search Institute
700 South Third Street, Suite 210
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1138
(800) 888-7828; Fax: (612) 376-8956
si@search-institute.org
www.search-institute.org/assets/forty.htm
At the heart of Search Institute's work is a framework of 40 developmental assets, which are positive experiences, relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Youth Today, The Newspaper on Youth Work
www.youthtoday.org

CHAPTER 3

PROMOTING A SENSE OF SAFETY

Readings related to Safety:

American Academy of Pediatrics and American Public Health Association.
National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs. 1992.
To order a copy, contact the American Academy of Pediatrics, (800) 433-9016.

Association of University Women.
Short Changing Girls, Shortchanging America, A National Poll to Assess Self Esteem, Educational Experiences, Interest in Math and Science, and Career Aspirations. Association of University Women, 1991.

Benard, Bonnie.
Moving Toward a Just and Vital Culture: Multiculturalism in Our Schools. Portland, OR: Western Regional Center for Drug Free Schools and Communities, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1991.

Berman, Shelly.
"The Real Ropes Course: The Development of Social Consciousness." *ESR Journal*, 1990.

Caine, Renate Nummela and Geoffrey Caine.
Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain. Alexandria, VA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1994.

CA Department of Education.
Hate-Motivated Behavior in Schools: Response Strategies for School Boards, Administrators, Law Enforcement, and Communities. Sacramento, CA: CA Department of Education, 1997.
www.cde.ca.gov/cdepress

CA Department of Education.
Safe and Healthy Schools. Sacramento, CA: CA Department of Education, 1997.
www.cde.ca.gov/cdepress

CA Department of Education.
School Facilities. Sacramento, CA: CA Department of Education, 1997.

Creighton, Allan, and Paul Kivel.
Helping Teens Stop Violence. Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 1990.
This guide provides model anti-bias workshops developed for young people.
To order a copy, call (800) 266-5592.

Creighton, Allan, and Paul Kivel.
Making the Peace. Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 1997.
This is a complete, 15 session anti-violence curriculum for young people. To order a copy, call (800)266-5592.

Jensen, Eric.
Teaching with the Brain in Mind. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum, 1998.

NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Care.
NSACA. 1137 Washington St., Boston, MA 02124.
To order a copy, call (617) 298-5012.

Pittman Karen J., and M. Wright.
A Rationale for Enhancing the Role of the Non-School Voluntary Sector in Youth Development. Washington, DC: Center for YouthDevelopment and Policy Research, Academy for Youth Development, 1991.

Schneidewind, Nancy, and Ellen Davidson.
Open Minds to Equality: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities to Promote Race, Sex, Class, and Age Equity. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989.

Stern-LaRosa, Caryl, and Ellen Hofheimer Bettmann.
Hate Hurts: How Children Learn and Unlearn Prejudice. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc., 2000.

Web Sites, Publications and Technical Assistance Agencies:

National Child Care Information Center
243 Church St., NW, 2nd Floor
Vienna, VA 22180
(800) 616-2242
www.nccic.org

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care
(800) 598-5437
http://nrc.uchsc.edu

The Teaching Tolerance Project
400 Washington Ave.
Montgomery, AL 36104
Fax: (334) 264-3121
www.splcenter.org
The Teaching Tolerance Project offers free anti-bias educational materials for grades K-12, and a free anti-bias magazine.

CHAPTER 4

ENCOURAGING RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Readings related to Relationship Building:

Benard, Bonnie.
"How to Be a Turnaround Teacher." *Reaching Today's Youth*. (Spring 1998): 31-35.

Community Board Program.
Conflict Resolution, An Elementary School Curriculum. San Francisco, CA: Community Board Program, 1990.

Community Board Program.
Conflict Resolution, A Secondary School Curriculum. San Francisco, CA: Community Board Program, 1990.

Freedman, M.
The Kindness Of Strangers: Reflections On The Mentoring Movement. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures, 1992.
www.ppv.org

Goleman, Daniel.
Emotional Intelligence. Bantam Books, 1995.

Halaby, Mona Hajjar.
Belonging: Creating Community in the Classroom. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books, 2000.

Kohn, Alfie.
Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1996.

CHAPTER 5

Readings related to Youth Participation:

California Department of Education.
Children Teaching Children. CD-ROM. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, 1998.
www.cde.ca.gov/cdepress

Henderson, Nan.
"Resiliency in Practice: Fostering Resiliency in Children and Youth—Four Basic Steps For Families, Educators and Other Caring Adults." *Resiliency In Action: Practical Ideas for Overcoming Risks and Building Strengths in Youth, Families, and Communities*.
To order a copy, contact www.resiliency.com.

Holman, Peggy, and Tom Devane, eds.
The Change Handbook: Group Methods for Shaping the Future. 1999.
This book describes high-leverage, systemic change methods. To order a copy, contact www.bkconnection.com.

Llewellyn, Grace.
The Teenage Liberation Handbook. Eugene, OR: Lowry House Publishers, 1998.
This book presents an inspiring discussion of self-education, and suggestions for teens who want to create their own learning experiences.

Web Sites, Publications and Technical Assistance Agencies:

At the Table
National 4-H Council
www.fourhcouncil.edu
At the Table provides tools and ideas to support youth participation in decision-making.

Youth Leadership Institute
870 Market St., Suite 708
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 397-2256
www.yli.org
Youth Leadership Institute provides tools and information on increasing youth leadership, with a focus on under-represented youth.

Youth on Board
58 Day St., 3rd Floor
PO Box 440322
Somerville, MA 02144
(617) 623-9900
www.youthonboard.org
Youth on Board offers information on including youth on Boards of Directors.

Readings related to Community Involvement:

Center For Youth Development and Policy Research.
Advancing Youth Development: A Curriculum For Training Youth Workers. Washington DC: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Educational Development, 1996.

CA Department of Education.
Educational Leadership for Service-Learning. Sacramento, CA: CA Department of Education, 1999.
www.cde.ca.gov/cdepress

CA Department of Education.
Service Learning: Linking Classrooms and Communities. Sacramento, CA: CA Department of Education, 1999.
www.cde.ca.gov/cdepress

Earth Works Group.
50 Simple Things Kids Can Do To Save the Earth. Econo-clad Books, 1999.

Ellis, Susan, Katherine Noyes Campbell, Trina Tracy, and Anne Weisbord.
Children as Volunteers: Preparing for Community Service. Energize Books.
To order a copy, contact www.pointsofflight.org or call (800) 272-8306.

Kretzmann, John P., and John L. McKnight.
Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets. ACTA Publications, 1993.

Kretzmann, John P. and Paul H. Schmitz.
"It Takes a Child to Raise a Village." *Wingspread: A Newsletter of the Johnson Foundation*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.
www.ppv.org

Kurth-Schai, R.
"The Roles of Youth In Society: A Reconceptualization." *Education Forum*. 52(2) (1988): 117.

Lewis, Barbara.
The Kids' Guide to Social Action. Free Spirit Publishing, 1991.

Web Sites, Publications and Technical Assistance Agencies:

Rebuilding Together with Christmas in April
1536 Sixteenth St., NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 483-9083
general_mail@christmasinapril.org
www.christmasinapril.org
3318 Adeline Street
Berkeley, CA 94703
(510) 644-8979
www.rebuildingtogetherabc.com/

Christmas in April is a non-profit, community organization that organizes volunteers during the month of April to rehabilitate the homes of low-income, disabled seniors.

Do Something
423 West 55th St., 8th Floor
New York, NY 10019
Fax: (212) 582-1307
mail@dosomething.org
www.dosomething.org

DoSomething provides young people with resources and support to implement their unique community involvement projects.

Local volunteer centers

Contact your local volunteer centers to set up short-term organized community service activities. See your phone book or community pages of local papers for contact information.

The National Mentoring Partnership
1400 I St., NW, Suite 850
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 729-4345
www.mentoring.org

The National Mentoring Partnership provides information on recruiting, training, and utilizing adult mentors.

Youth Service California
663 Thirteenth St.
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 302-0550
info@yscal.org
www.yscal.org

YSCal promotes a statewide youth service movement as an effort towards healthy youth development, strengthened communities, and improved education in California.

CHAPTER 7

Resources For Creating Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences

Armstrong, Thomas.
Seven Kinds of Smart: Identifying and Developing Your Multiple Intelligences. Plume, 1999.

Hass-Foletta, K & Cogley, M.
School-age ideas and activities for after-school programs. Nashville: School-Age Notes, 1990.

Hynes, Kathryn, Susan O'Connor and An-Me Chung.
Literacy: Exploring Strategies to Enhance Learning in After-School Programs, National Institute on Out-of-School Time: Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, 1999.

Jensen, Eric.
Teaching With the Brain in Mind. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998.

Johnson, David W. , Roger T. Johnson and Edythe Johnson Holubec. *Cooperation in the Classroom*. Interaction Book Company: Edina, Minnesota, 1998.

Kagan, Spencer.
Cooperative Learning. Kagan Cooperative, 1997.

Lazear, David.
Seven Ways of Knowing: Understanding Multiple Intelligences, a Handbook of Techniques for Expanding Intelligence, 2nd ed. Palatine, IL: IRI/Skylight Publishing, 1991.

McLaughlin, Milbrey W., Merita Irby and Juliet Langman. *Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter For Youth Development.* Washington, D.C.: Public Education Network. Available on the publisher's website: **www.PublicEducation.org**.

Montessori, Maria. The Absorbent Mind. Henry Holt, 1995.
—-. *Discovery of the Child*. Ballantine Books, 1996.
—-. *From Childhood to Adolescence.* Buccaneer Books, 1995.

McGuire, Susan.
Homework and Out-of School Time Programs: Filling the Need, Finding a Balance. National Institute on Out-of-School Time: Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, 1993.

Web Sites, Publications and Technical Assistance Agencies:

Bringing Education To After-School Programs
Office of Education Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov/pubs/After_School_Programs

KIDS Curriculum Kits
Urban Family Institute
1300 Allison St., NW
Washington, DC 20011
(202) 234-KIDS
KIDS Curriculum Kits offers self-contained curriculum kits for a variety of ages and subjects.

Storytelling, Drama, Creative Dramatics, Puppetry & Readers Theater for Children & Young Adults
http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/drama.htm#D

The **LEARNS** website offers information and ideas on promoting literacy and effectively training tutors.
http://www.nwrel/Learns

The **AMERICA READS** website offers resources, links, and publications that promote literacy as well as information on tutor training.
http://www.ed.gov/americareads

The Project Wild and **Project Learning Tree** websites offer conservation and environmental education programs for students in K-12. The curriculums are project based and easily adaptable for after-school settings. Ffree training and materials for program are also available.
http://www.projectwild.org
http://www.plt.org

Afterschool.gov
http://www.afterschool.gov/cgibinh/dissub.pl?page=maintopic4&subpage=main4stpc1&sid+1

This site provides links to federal resources that support children and youth during out-of-school hours and provides information on running programs and planning activities for consumer education, Art, Environmental Education, Geography, History, Homework Help, Math, Reading, Science and Transportation.

Buck Institute for Education
www.bie.org/pbl

This site provides information, resources and sample curricula for project-based learning projects for middle and high school age youth.

The Project Approach
www.project-approach.com

This site provides readers with resources and examples of successful projects undertaken by teachers working with children of different ages and cultures in different parts of the world. The site also serves as a starting point for discussions on the Project Approach by providing links and access to a variety of listservs, web-based conferences and similar organizations.

Houghton Mifflin's Project Based Learning Space
http://www.college.hmco.com/education/pbl/index.html

This site provides background knowledge and theory, projects, overview of teaching concepts, and program design to integrate project-based learning, references, features of PBL and instructional sequences in project-based instruction.

Exploring Multiple Intelligences: New Dimensions of Learning
www.multi-intell.com

This site provides an overview of multiple intelligences, practical exercises for exploring intelligences, and lesson ideas which use the intelligences in teaching and learning.

WNET/Thirteen's NTTI (National Teacher Training Institute)
http://www.thirteen.org/wnetschool/ntti/
http://www.chariho.k12.ri.us/curriculum/MISmart/mi_smart.htm
http://www.thirteen.org/wnetschool/concept2class/month11/index_sub2.html
http://www.thirteen.org/wnetschool/concept2class/month11/characteristics

This website provides resources, sample curricula, information, and an on-line curriculum for teachers and instructors on topics such as cooperative and collaborative learning strategies, learning styles and intelligences, after-school programming, and more.

New Horizons for Learning - Cooperative Learning
http://www.newhorizons.org/trm_cooplrn.html

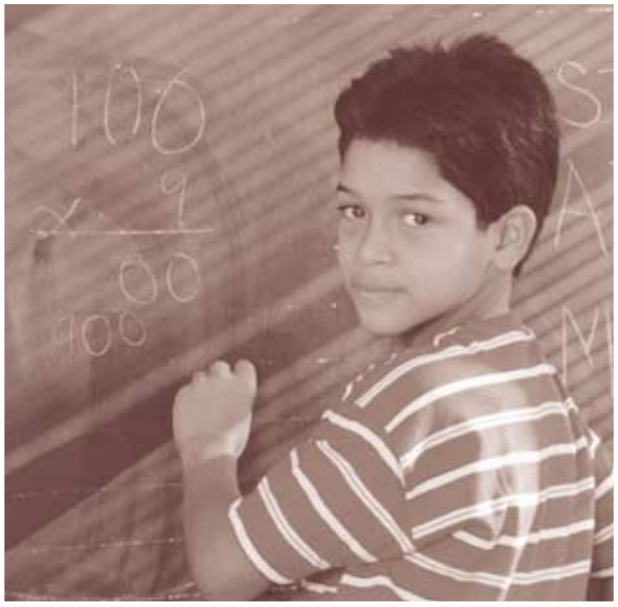
This site provides cooperative learning lesson strategies, ideas, and many practical demonstrations from a nonprofit education organization. It also provides cooperative-learning activities and lessons by subject area for grades kindergarten through fifth.

Howard Community College
http://www.howardcc.edu/profdev/resources/learning/groups1.htm

This site provides ideas on cooperative learning and learning in small groups. The sample of group learning activities at Howard Community College focus on college teaching, but can be adapted for a variety of ages.

The Foundations Technical Assistance Center for Before and After School Enrichment Programs
http://www.foundations-inc.org/foundations/index.cfm

This organization was created to assist individuals and organizations in establishing high quality content-based enrichment programs for children in Grades K-12 during the non-school hours. The website provides curriculum for before and after school elementary, middle and high school programs.



Endnotes

About the Endnotes

In this section we have cited the references used throughout the guide. The endnotes are arranged by chapter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

[i]The Youth Development Framework For Practice was created with funding from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, as part of the national Building Exemplary Systems of Training for Youth Workers (BEST) Initiative.

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

[i] Dr. James Connell and Dr. Michelle Gambone co-direct the Community Action for Youth Project (CAYP), a cooperative project of Gambone & Associates and the Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE).

[ii] Carnegie Council for Adolescent Development. *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*. (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, June 1989).

[iii] Pittman, Karen J. *Promoting Youth Development: Strengthening the Role of Youth-Serving and Community Organizations*. (Washingotn, DC: Center for Youth Development, Academy for Educational Development, 1991). Contact: (202) 884-8267.

Pittman, Karen J. and Cahill, Michelle. *A New Vision: Promoting Youth Development*. (testimony of Karen Johnson Pittman before the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families). (Washington, DC: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Educational Development, 1991). Contact: (202) 884-8267.

[iv] Pittman, Karen J., Merita Irby and Thaddeus Ferber. *Unfinished Business: Further Reflections on a Decade of Promoting Youth Development*. (Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, 2000). Contact: 301-270-6250.

McLaughlin, Milbrey, Merita, Irby, and Juliet Langman. *Urban Sanctuaries: Neighborhood Organizations in the Lives and Futures of Inner-City Youth*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994).

CHAPTER 2

PROGRAMS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

[i] Gambone, Michelle A. *Community Action and Youth Development: What Can Be Done And How Can We Measure Progress?* Draft outline, prepared for Aspen Roundtable on Community Change Initiatives and the Center for Youth Development. (1998).

PROMOTING A SENSE OF SAFETY

[i] Pittman K.J., and M. Wright. *A Rationale for Enhancing The Role of the Non-School Voluntary Sector in Youth Development*. Prepared for Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs. (Washington, DC: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Youth Development, 1991).

[ii] Jensen, Eric. *Teaching With the Brain in Mind*. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum, 1998). Caine, Renate Nummela and Geoffrey Caine. *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain*. (Alexandria, VA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.,1994).

[iii] Gibbs, Jeanne. *Tribes: A New Way of Learning and Being Together*. (Sausalito, CA: CenterSource Systems, 1995).

[iv] Creighton, Allan, and Paul Kivel. *Helping Teens Stop Violence*. (Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 1990).

[v] Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

[i] Connell, James P. and Michelle A. Gambone. *Youth Development In Community Settings: A Community Action Framework*. Draft copy. 1999.

[ii] Freedman, M. *The Kindness Of Strangers: Reflections On The Mentoring Movement*. (Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures, 1992).

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

[i] Henderson, Nan. "Resiliency in Practice: Fostering Resiliency in Children and Youth—Four Basic Steps For Families, Educators and Other Caring Adults." (Reprinted from the Book: *Resiliency In Action: Practical Ideas for Overcoming Risks and Building Strengths in Youth. Families, and Communities*). **www.resiliency.com.**

[ii] Rachel Hertz-Lazarowitz and H. Shachar, *Changes in Teachers' Verbal Behavior in Cooperative Classrooms*, Cooperative Learning, Santa Cruz: V. 11, Dec. 1990, No. 2. P. 13-14.

[iii] **www.search-institute.org**

CHAPTER 6

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

[i] Kurth-Schai, R. "The Roles of Youth In Society: A Reconceptualization." *Education Forum*. 52(2) (1988): 117.

[ii] Olsen, Laurie and Amy Scharf. "Realizing the Promise and Opportunity of After School Programs in a Diverse State: A Preliminary Analysis of Equity and Access Issues in California's After School Program," *Unpublished paper*. 21. Contact: **www.californiatomorrow.org**.

[iii] Scharf, Amy and Laura Woodlief. "Moving Toward Equity and Access in After School Programs: A Review of the Literature. " *Unpublished paper*. 25. Contact: **www.californiatomorrow.org.**

[iv] Kretzmann, John P. and Paul H. Schmitz. "It Takes a Child to Raise a Village." *Wingspread: A Newsletter of the Johnson Foundation*. 1994-1995.

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LEARNING EXPERIENCES

[i] Connell, James and Michelle Gambone. Youth Development In Community Settings: A Community Action Framework.

[ii] Milbrey, McLaughlin, Community Counts, Public Education Network, p.11.

[iii] Ibid

[iv] Cooperative Learning Response to Diversity Curriculum. California Department of Education Curriculum Website. 1 October 2000. **www.cde.ca.gov/iasa/cooplrng2.html**

[v] Johnson, David W. and Roger T. An Overview of Cooperative Learning. The Cooperative Learning Center of the University of Minnesota Website **www.clcrc.com/pages/overviewpaper.html**

[vi] Interview w/ Ellen S. Gannett, Associate Director of the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at the Center for Research on Women at Wesley College. WNET School Website. 1 October 2000. **http://www.thirteen.org/wnetschool/concept2class/month11/index_sub2.html**

[vii] Blumenfeld, P., Soloway, E., Marx, R., Krajcik, J., Guzdial, M., & Palincsar, A. (1991) Motivating project-based learning: Sustaining the doing, supporting the learning. Educational Psychologist, 26 (3 & 4), 371

[viii] Milbrey, McLaughlin, Community Counts, Public Education Network

Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD)

CNYD is a non-profit intermediary organization which works to strengthen the field of youth development in the San Francisco Bay Area. CNYD works at the community level, providing youth-serving agencies with technical assistance, training and resources to strengthen programming and practice; and at the systems level, working with funders and policymakers to align resources to more effectively support community-based youth development efforts. CNYD's current efforts include:

- **The Youth Development Learning Project**, which offers youth workers and organizations staff development opportunities and capacity building resources.
- **The Youth Development Program Outcomes Project**, which helps move youth-serving organizations and funders toward effective outcomes-based programming.
- Serving as technical assistance intermediary for The San Francisco Beacon Initiative, a city-wide collaboration between communities and schools.
- Working to promote sound after school policy and support community-school partnerships.

For more information on CNYD, please call (415) 495-0622 or email us at info@cnyd.org