CLAIMING YOUR VOICE

LESSON PLAN

Objective: Create an opportunity for youth and adults to understand each other’s perspectives and have dialogue about power.

Advance Preparation:
Prepare statements to read or display in media presentation.
Prepare signs to hang in the room. Signs can be limited to two signs reading agree and disagree, while other options can be available, such as:
  • Strongly Agree
  • Somewhat Agree
  • Neutral
  • Somewhat Disagree
  • Strongly Disagree

Materials Needed:
  • Prepared statements to read or display in media presentation.
  • Agree/disagree signs to hang around room, preferably on opposite sides/ends of the room.
  • Tape, or other material, to hang signs around room.
  • Sufficient space for participants to move around the room.

Time Needed: 15 minutes. Time may vary depending on the depth of conversation.

Background: Effective youth-adult partnerships are those in which each person is able to contribute his/her unique talents, skills and knowledge. Youth and adults share equally in the decision making process. Each group (youth and adults) is treated with respect and dignity. Often, an unequal distribution of power makes it difficult for this to happen. Because both youth and adults are used to adults having more power than young people do, an honest exploration of power can be extremely helpful to any group seeking to achieve a more equitable balance of power.

Youth-adult partnerships do not occur any time youth and adults are present in the same room! However, they do occur when youth and adults plan, learn and work together, with both groups sharing equally in the decision making process.

The Youth Board is made up of youth and adults that are involved in their community and care about its well-being. These youth and adults often have different perspectives on life and experiences. When working together as a team, it is important that youth and adult groups, such as the Youth Board, try to understand each other’s perspective. Doing so helps build and strengthen the partnership formed by serving on the board. This exercise will give youth and adults the opportunity to understand each other’s perspectives and have an honest dialogue about power.

Activity: A statement will be posted on the screening and read aloud to the group. Consider the statement and move to the side of the room, standing next to the sign that best describes how you feel about the statement (whether you agree or disagree with the statement). There is no debate or conversation when choosing your decision and moving to the corresponding sign. This will allow people to honestly indicate their opinions without being challenged. After all statements have been read and participants have indicated whether or not they agree with the statement, the group will have discussion.

Statements that can be posted/read to the group include, but are not limited to:
Youth should be able to evaluate the programs and agencies that serve them.
Young people don’t have enough life experience to make informed choices about their lives.
Youth should be involved in hiring staff.
Adults don’t listen to the opinions of young people when program planning.
Every youth agency should have young people on its board.

For more information on Volunteerism within Texas AgriLife, please visit: http://od.tamu.edu
of directors.

Elected officials should involve young people in making every decision that affects youth.

Young people should sit on the school board.

**Reflection & Discussion:**

**Option 1:** After reading each statement and allowing participants to indicate whether or not they agree or disagree, ask for volunteers to share why they agreed or disagreed with the statement. At this point, it is still important for discussion not to occur, so that participants do not feel pressured to vote a certain way.

**Option 2:** After all the statements are read, allow some time for discussion. You can go back through each statement and ask for discussion or ask for volunteers to pick a statement and discuss their reasoning for voting agree/disagree.

After hearing from the participants, pose the following questions to the group for discussion:

What are some of the main ideas you heard?

As you listened to others’ opinions, what hopes or fears did you have?

What were you reminded of as you heard people give their opinions?

Which opinions delighted you?

Which opinions surprised you?

What values do we need to build in creating youth-adult partnerships?

What implications does this exercise bring up for youth-adult partnerships?

What changes may be required of us?

**References:** This lesson was taken and adapted from “Youth-Adult Partnerships: A Training Manual” (2003) The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, National Network for Youth, youth Leadership Institute.