Youth–Adult Partnerships (Y–AP) is the practice of youth and adults working together in a democratic way—through shared work over a sustained period of time—to strengthen their organization and/or community.

**PRACTICING YOUTH–ADULT PARTNERSHIPS**

- Creates sense of belonging—youth voices are heard, enhancing ownership and responsibility
- Builds relationships—youth are seen as capable partners, taking active leadership roles working alongside volunteers and staff
- Emphasizes learning by doing—youth and adults gain hands-on experience learning from each other

**THROUGH COMMUNICATION**

- Create a Facebook page
- Start a Snapchat story
- Invite youth to start a blog or podcast

**THROUGH MENTORING**

- Pair new staff/volunteers with seasoned youth
- Set measurable goals for mentorship

**THROUGH LEADERSHIP**

- Recruit youth to lead or co-facilitate group meetings and events
- Host youth discussion panels at professional development trainings

**HOW TO IMPLEMENT YOUTH–ADULT PARTNERSHIPS**

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<th>YOUTH</th>
<th>STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY</th>
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| • Encourage youth to challenge their biases towards adults  
  • Ask for feedback often from youth on how to improve Y–AP  
  • Take stock of youth skill sets and abilities to determine potential roles and responsibilities  
  • Learn from youth and ensure their voice is heard  | • Remember your role is a partner  
  • Provide opportunities for young people to lead and teach  
  • Treat youth as individuals  
  • Challenge your biases towards youth  
  • Identify staff, volunteers, and youth as champions to advocate for and encourage best practices of Y–AP  | • Provide education to stakeholders on value and purpose of Y–AP  
  • Facilitate training to staff and volunteers on practice of Y–AP  
  • Conduct ongoing evaluation to assess level of engagement in Y–AP  
  • Include all stakeholders in decision-making to promote shared ownership |

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STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT YOUTH–ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

- Host a youth–adult social to welcome new members and get re-acquainted with returning members
- Conduct a brainstorming session to review goals of Y–AP and identify what Y–AP looks like in your group
- Create mission or vision statement that inspires and energizes group to practice Y–AP
- Have youth and adults write down skill sets and interests to assist with matching of mentors
- Build on group strengths and abilities to identify projects youth and adults can share in overseeing
- Track progress with regular meetings to celebrate success stories and address challenges

YOUTH BENEFITS

- Gain confidence, responsibility, and independence
- Build critical thinking, teamwork, public speaking, and leadership skills
- Strengthen commitment to community service into adulthood
- Enhance sense of belonging

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER BENEFITS

- Strengthen sense of community connectedness
- Enhance understanding of young people and their developmental needs
- Build skills in collaboration and teamwork

ORGANIZATION BENEFITS

- Gain new energy, perspective, and ideas
- Become more connected and responsive to the needs of young people in the community
- Better enhance overall mission to better serve children and youth

RESOURCES

- Act for Youth: http://actforyouth.net/youth_development/engagement/partnerships.cfm
- Advocates for Youth: http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/youth-adult-partnerships
- Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric: https://cerc.msu.edu/yaprubric
- Youth-Adult Partnership for Youth Empowerment: https://fyi.uwex.edu/youthadultpartnership/

SELECTED REFERENCES


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