



Positive Youth Development **Practicing Youth-Adult Partnerships**

VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy

Intended Audience:

4-H volunteers

Learning Outcomes:

- Volunteers will describe the significant contributions youth make to a program.
- Volunteers will describe benefits of youth-adult partnerships to youth, adults, and organizations.
- Volunteers will identify ways to build youth-adult partnerships.

Time:

20 – 30 minutes

Supplies Needed:

- Pencils and paper
- Markers and flip chart paper
- Power Point, Computer and LCD Projector
- Handouts and Evaluations

Do Ahead:

Prepare handouts.

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Volunteerism for the Next Generation:

<http://nextgeneration.4h.org/volunteerism/>

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<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/>

INTRODUCTION

Think about the youth and adults involved in your 4-H club and county program. What are the attitudes and feelings of the adults toward the young people they are working with? Is there a real partnership between the youth and adults? What would the young people say about the adults' attitudes toward them? Would the youth say they have an active voice and share in decision making? (Power Point Slides 1, 2)

Not too long ago, the typical adult perception about youth was:

- young people should be seen and not heard
- young people should speak only when spoken to
- because of their experience, adults know what's best for young people
- young people have no place in adult society

These perceptions are changing as research in youth development and youth-adult partnership training demonstrates the benefits to youth, adults, and communities when young people's voices are heard. (Power Point Slide 3) Research and training strives to change today's adult perception about youth to:

- the opinions of young people should be welcomed and valued
- young people should be viewed as resources to their community
- young people should be involved in making decisions about programs that affect them

WHAT TO DO

Research shows that although youth-adult partnerships are exciting, they often are not easy. In many communities and organizations, youth and adults have few opportunities to work together as partners. Fortunately, the 4-H program provides many opportunities for youth and adults to learn how to be partners together. 4-H youth and adults can take what they have learned and experienced and share it with other community organizations they are involved with.

Activity 1: Mapping Youth-Adult Partnerships (YAP)

Tell the group they will be using a mapping tool to examine the ways that their 4-H community uses YAP and includes young people in decision making. Distribute Mapping YAP (Handout 1). When they have completed their map, have them share their map with a partner. Then bring the group together to respond to the following:



VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy for 4-H Youth Development:

<http://www.national4-h-headquarters.gov/comm/vrkc.pdf>

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References for this lesson:

- Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, et al. (2003). *Youth-Adult Partnerships: A Training Manual*. Takoma Park, MD.
- *Youth and Adults as Partners*. National 4-H Youth Directions Council (no date).

- Where are you already working in partnerships?
- Where are youth currently in decision making roles?
- How easy was it to identify places in which you are working in partnership?
- When you shared your map with others, did you find some surprises?
- What does this exercise tell you about 4-H in your club and county?
- How does this help you think about your next steps?

A youth-adult partnership is a joint effort—youth and adults working together to achieve common goals. (Power Point Slide 4) Caring adults bring knowledge, experience, and access to resources, while youth bring fresh ideas, new perspectives, energy, enthusiasm, and talents. To make a partnership successful:

- Adults need to be willing to share their power and responsibility
- Youth need to be willing to gain power and take on responsibility
- Both youth and adults need the skills to work successfully together
- Everyone needs to forget everything they have ever thought about youth and adults as separate groups and start treating each other with respect and as allies.

Activity 2: Benefits and Challenges

Divide the participants into small groups. Distribute the flip chart paper and markers to the groups. Tell half of the groups to draw a body of an adult and half of the groups to draw a body of a youth. On the inside of the adult body drawing, the group should write the benefits that adults may bring to a youth-adult partnership. On the outside of the adult body drawing, write the challenges that adults may bring. The groups with the body of the youth do the same with the benefits on the inside of the body and challenges on the outside. Allow the groups time to discuss the benefits and challenges then have each group present their drawings to the whole group. Have the group share responses to: When you look at the benefits, what feelings do you have? What are there about the benefits that will help overcome the challenges? How can we build or strengthen youth-adult partnerships in 4-H?

Review Handout 2 which outlines the benefits when successful youth-adult partnerships occur.

So where do you begin? It starts with a framework of approaching young people as partners. How do you currently work with youth? What is your attitude when considering partnering with youth? (Power Point Slide 5)

- **Youth as Objects—Adults know what is best for young people and control situations in which they allow them to be involved.** In this approach the attitude is that young people have little to contribute. Adults may work to keep young people in a relatively powerless position. Adults with such opinions have no intention of allowing youth participation. Adults may truly believe that they need to protect young people from ‘suffering’ from mistakes. However, we know that involvement in meaningful roles is essential to the positive growth and development of successful young adults.
- **Youth as Recipients—Adults allow young people to take part in decision making because they think the experience will be ‘good for them.’** This has a real focus on young people’s learning from ‘adult society,’ and that young people need to be guided through their participation in adult society. This attitude is characterized by adults allowing



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young people to take part in decision making because they think the experience will be 'good for them' and an excellent opportunity to practice for when they become 'real' people. Consequently, responsibilities or tasks often delegated to young people are either trivial (it won't matter if they mess up) or those which adults find distasteful (roadside cleanup campaigns). Adults with such viewpoints on youth involvement often control the terms and conditions of the involvement. It is easy to allow your mind to think in this way without even consciously realizing it. It is important to challenge your thinking to make every effort conscious so that youth are not viewed in this way.

- **Youth as Partners—Adults respect young people as having something significant to offer now and youth are encouraged to become involved.** Adults feel that young people are critical to the success of a program or, in this case, an organization focused on youth needs and issues. When adults hold such opinions, youth are seen as equal partners in decision making. Adults who view young people as partners are comfortable working with groups which have equal numbers of youth and adults. As a result of these relationships, programs and organizations are more effective while young people meet real developmental needs.

Conclusion:

So where are you? Consider the benefits of youth-adult partnerships to all of the activities, events, groups, and programs you are involved in. How will you take the next steps to creating youth-adult partnerships? (Power Point Slide 6)

TALK IT OVER

Reflect:

- What are the benefits of youth-adult partnerships to youth, adults, and organizations?
- What concerns and benefits exist in the continuum of attitudes toward youth-adult partnerships?

Apply:

- What ways can you increase the number and the quality of youth-adult partnerships in 4-H groups, projects, committees, and events?

EVALUATION

Ask each participant to complete the evaluation tool (Handout 4).

ENHANCE or SIMPLIFY

Use the case studies provided in Handout 3.

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Handout 1

Mapping Youth-Adult Partnerships

1. Think about all the groups, committees, teams, people, and organizations that make decisions for 4-H in your county. Include the groups that you are a part of as well as those you are not a part of. In the square below, make a list of those groups.
2. Think about where youth are involved in the decision making of the various groups. Circle the groups that use youth-adult partnerships. Also, think about the level of the youth-adult partnership—is it token, or do the youth have a full voice and vote?
3. Now, think about the groups that could have youth-adult teams or that could increase the level of their youth-adult partnership. Put a star next to those groups to indicate where new opportunities exist.

Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, et al. (2003). *Youth-Adult Partnerships: A Training Manual*. Takoma Park, MD. pg. 90.



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Handout 2

Everyone Benefits When Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships Occur**Youth engaged in practicing youth-adult partnerships:**

- Increase self-esteem, increase the ability to think and act in responsible ways, and increase problem solving skills when they have opportunities to contribute to a common goal and engage in positive relationships with caring adults.
- Are empowered by working and learning with caring adults.
- Gain a sense of belonging.
- Gain new respect and acceptance from adults.
- Serve as role models for other youth in their community.

Adults engaged in practicing youth-adult partnerships:

- Can change negative attitudes and stereotypes about youth.
- Can get re-energized and enthusiastic about their own work when they partner with young people.
- Can increase their communication, teamwork, and coaching skills.

4-H programs, communities, and organizations engaged in practicing youth-adult partnerships:

- Are strengthened when all members, including youth, are actively involved.
- Become more connected and responsive to youth and are better able to serve youth.
- See the benefits when involving youth in responsible positions and want to involve more youth in responsible roles.
- Demonstrate the power of youth to other community organizations.



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Handout 3

Case Studies for Exploring Youth-Adult Partnerships

Divide participants into three groups. Ask each group to discuss the following scenario and assign one group to address it as Youth as Objects, one group to address it as Youth as Recipients, and one group to address it as Youth as Partners.

Case Scenario: Sally is involved in a community project. She has skills in letter writing. She volunteered to write a letter to the Mayor asking for permission to do the group project. It is time for her to write the letter. What do you say or do?

Ask the groups to share what they came up with as ways to address this case from their given point of view. Keep the groups split up and give them one of the following case studies. Ask them to come up with an approach as “Youth as Partners” perspective, then present their approach to the large group when finished.

Case # 1: You are an adult advisor to a group of teens planning a party. The group has scheduled a planning meeting. You are the only adult and they are looking up to you to get the meeting started. What do you say or do?

Case #2: Your group is meeting to work on the project that has been selected. Instead of getting down to business, the teens are flirting and laughing. You don't perceive that business is getting done. A youth is a chair of the committee and is not doing anything about the situation. What do you do?

Case #3: You are a 4-H club leader and the club vice-president, Jan, has approached you about the idea of signing the club up to clean a section of highway as a community service project. This is the first you have heard of the idea, and to your knowledge, there has been no discussion with the rest of the club about this idea. What do you say or do?

Follow Up: Use discussion questions to bring this section to a close.

1. What were you thinking when you were doing this activity?
2. What was the most important thing for you about doing this?
3. What does this say to you about your role with young people in 4-H or other organizations that work with youth?
4. How might you use what you learned in this exercise in expanding your youth-adult partnership skills?



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Handout 4

Evaluation

Please complete the following evaluation. The results of the evaluation will be shared with those who work with the program. Your participation in this evaluation is voluntary. Your responses will be combined with the responses of all other participants and you will not be individually identified on any report prepared.

Please answer the questions by circling the number that indicates your level of understanding of the topics listed before and after the training.

1 = Very little understanding

2 = Understand somewhat

3 = Clear understanding

	NOW – After the training	THEN – Before the training
1. I can describe the significant contributions youth make to a program.	1 2 3	1 2 3
2. I can identify the benefits of youth- adult partnerships to youth, adults, and organizations.	1 2 3	1 2 3
3. I can identify ways to build youth- adult partnerships in 4-H projects, activities, and events.	1 2 3	1 2 3

- Please list at least two ideas or skills that you learned as a result of this presentation.
- How will you use what you learned in this presentation?



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