ELO Expanded Learning Opportunities

Two-Minute Tips

This Week's Topic: Youth-Adult Collaboration

Youth-adult relationships can take on many shapes: from a formal match up of mentors and youth to more informal relationships, established during programming, between staff and youth. These relationships can play an important role in young persons' lives to help overcome adversity, increase academic outcomes, develop positive identities, and positively impact peer relationships and community involvement.[1] One way to foster strong relationships and promote strong voices in your youth program is to collaborate with your young charges whenever possible. Collaborating is not only fun, it also helps build important career-readiness skills, promotes community, and increases both youth and staff morale.[2] It is truly a win-win scenario.

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips to encourage collaboration between staff and youth

Get involved

Work and play alongside youth. During free play this could mean asking a child if she would like to build a Hot Wheels car track with you. In structured activities, look for chances to work alongside youth to accomplish a shared goal.

Create opportunities for shared goals

Plan activities that require multiple people working together to accomplish something. Then, get involved in the work. Examples include:

- Team sports such as soccer or basketball
- Writing short plays together
- Choreographing a dance for 3 or more people
- Working in a group to build a model

Step back and let youth lead

Let go of needing to be the leader of every activity. If this is new to you or your program, start with co-facilitating small activities. For example, ask one youth to come up and help you lead the group in learning the rules of freeze tag. You can each take turns speaking and explaining to the group what the rules are. If you and your youth are more advanced in this practice, try letting youth lead an entire activity. Be close by to help support. Generally, opt to be a participant in the activity rather than a facilitator.

Plan and brainstorm together

Encourage youth to help brainstorm and plan activities with you. Practically speaking, this saves you from having to think up as many offerings. This also helps youth build important project-planning skills and feel included.

Tips in Action!

Watch more on collaborating with youth at Alchemy Skateboarding.

Want more two-minute tips?

Check out: https://cultivatelearning.uw.edu/expanded-learning-opportunities/

There you will find the latest tips, and an archive of past tips.

---

[1] The Oregon Community Foundation. (2016). *Positive adult role models: A learning brief*.

[2] International Youth Foundation. (October 8, 2018). Promoting youth-adult collaboration. *Field Notes*, *2*(10). https://www.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/FieldNotes10YouthAdultCollab.pdf