ELO Expanded Learning Opportunities

Two-Minute Tips

This Week's Topic: Developing Leaders

ELO programs offer an exciting space to nurture your young participants' leadership skills. Leadership opportunities support youth in "developing the ability to analyze their own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and professional goals, and have the self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and abilities to carry them out."[1] Opportunities for leadership also help prepare young people for success in education and the workforce by giving them a chance to practice time management, working in a team setting, setting goals, starting conversations, facilitating meetings, and making effective presentations.[2]

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips to integrate youth leadership opportunities into your program. [2]

Choice And Decision-Making

Developing leaders is a process that builds upon previous skills. Start by integrating opportunities for choice and decision-making within your program. Step back—within reason—and let participants see their decisions through. This applies to children as well. Start by having participants decide between two specific, or concrete options, then integrate more options, and finally open-ended options. These opportunities build confidence, which is important for future leadership opportunities.[3]

Program Responsibilities

Start by integrating participants into program responsibilities like passing out materials or making announcements.

Everyone Has Leadership Potential

A key component to providing leadership opportunities is recognizing and supporting *all* of your participants' leadership potential. The role or amount of support they need might look different, but everyone should have the opportunity to lead. Put their names on Popsicle sticks and randomly pull a youth leader. Have a leadership calendar and randomly assign one child to lead each week, day, or single project.

Support Skill Development

Support from caring adults is critical for developing leadership skills. Debrief after a leadership opportunity. Highlight strengths using non-evaluative language. Ask opened-ended questions to hear their perspective on how it went, what went well, what are opportunities for improvement, and what support or guidance is needed? Offer responsive support by suggesting strategies and resources that align with their concerns.
You might also invite a young leader to select an icebreaker, check-in, or reflection activity which they facilitate. Make sure to review it with them beforehand and provide any thoughts or input to help it run smoothly, be there to co-facilitate or support as needed, and debrief afterwards.

Tips in Action!

Watch more on developing leaders from Pacific Ballroom Dance.

Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:
https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expanded-learning-opportunities/

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

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[1]National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition. (2010) *Youth development & youth leadership*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota. Retrieved from http://nasetalliance.org/youthdev/index.htm.
[2]School-Based Health Alliance: Redefining Health for Kids and Teens. (2015). *Developing youth leadership skills*. Washington, DC:sba4all.org. Retrieved from http://www.sbh4all.org/training/youth-development/youth-engagement-toolkit/developing-youth-leadership-skills/
[3]Keinath, S. (2012). *5 Tips for building youth's leadership skills-Part 1: Making decisions*. East Lansing, MN: Michigan State University. Retrieved from http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/5_tips_for_building_youths_leadership_skills_part_1_making_decisions