



**30 years
& counting**

**School Practitioner
Listserv**

**A Weekly Community of Practice Network
for Sharing and Interchange**



February 13, 2017

Request from a colleague
>What's a good way to involve students in strengthening student/learning supports at their schools?

- Center Comments
- Comments from Youth
- Shared Resource from a Colleague in the Field

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Featured Set of Center Resources for
>Youth development and engagement

#####

Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested. The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.

For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of the weekly exchange, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For previous recent postings of this community of practice, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>
#####

Note: In keeping with the *National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports*,* this is being sent to and forwarded by over 114,000 school and community stakeholders concerned about (1) daily matters confronting schools, (2) promoting whole child development and positive school climate, and (3) the transformation of student and learning supports.

Requ^{est}: “How do we get students involved in processes for strengthening student/learning supports?”

Center Comments: In an interview, one youth stressed:

A process designed for youth without their perspectives is fundamentally flawed; youth add a language and legitimacy that appeals to other youth.

(see Whitlock & Hamilton http://www.actforyouth.net/documents/youth_dev.pdf)

Thanks to advocacy for and by youth leaders, it is commonplace to hear: *If we are going to plan for young people, we need their voices at this table.* However, reasons for bringing young people to the table vary. Some advocates stress the importance of understanding the perspectives of youth; others see youth participation as a way to promote youth development and empowerment; and others stress that youth participation benefits families, adults, organizations, planners, policy makers, communities, and society in general.

We are particularly interested in empowering youth voices so that the concerns of those segments of the population that usually have little power to influence policy are understood and addressed. For example, in our Center’s work with schools, we stress that all efforts to *personalize* interventions require mobilizing students to (a) express what supports they need and (b) indicate what’s working and what isn’t. And with respect to developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports, we stress the many opportunities for youth participation. In this respect, a school’s learning supports leadership team and its various work groups are great vehicles for engaged youth participation (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>).

When youth are included on the leadership team, they can help with such tasks as

- >gathering, aggregating, and analyzing data from students, families, and staff
- >mapping and analyzing resources at school and in the community
- >identifying priorities for system development (in keeping with the most pressing needs at the school)

and more.

As the leadership team forms work groups to address specific functions, students can help design interventions and, in some instances, play key roles in implementation (e.g., planning and implementing a welcoming and social support program for new students, peer-to-peer programs).

For a general discussion of promoting effective youth participation, see

- >*Youth Participation: Making it Real* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/youthpartic.pdf>

Excerpt:

“...Youth participation in planning and policy may take the form of

- (1) bringing youth to the table of an established “adult” organization (e.g., providing input as consumers and clients, representing the voice of youth as a group participant, assuming a leadership role at the table),
- (2) youth establishing and operating their own organization, or
- (3) creating a new organization where youth and adults collaborate as equals.

Given that youth are coming to the table, planning must address the following questions:

- What will be their responsibilities (roles, functions) and accountabilities? (In what ways will the responsibilities and accountabilities be the same and in what ways will they differ from the adults at the table?)

- Who should be recruited and how?
- How will they effectively be inducted into the operational infrastructure and prepared for their roles and functions?
- How will they be reimbursed for time, effort, and costs?
- How will meetings and workgroups be arranged to accommodate their school and work schedules?
- How will the group provide for continuously developing the capacity of youth (and all others) and support everyone's efforts in ways that enhance motivation for working together productively?
- Are there plans for regular debriefings and evaluations?

Comments from Youth: Over the years, we have asked our Young Adult Advisors these kind of questions about youth participation – see

> *What Youth Say about Participating* –
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/yaayouthpart.pdf>

Excerpt:

Q. 1. *Why should organizations focusing on health, education, welfare of adolescents/young adults include youth/young adults in planning and carrying out the work?*

> "I think it's important to include youth/young adults because they are the greatest resources in understanding what is necessary for their well-being. By collaborating with youth/young adults, organizations can become well-rounded as it takes in both perspectives of youth/young adults and the adults advising them."

> "Because getting primary information from the source you are going to help will make their experience and the advisors' experiences more enjoyable and able to reach its full potential. Communication is key, especially in situations such as these and feedback will only help when carrying out this type of work. It might also provide new and creative ideas the organization may not have thought of without the help of the people they are working with."

Q. 2. *What is the best way to keep youth/young adults engaged in advising adults?*

> "I think the best way to keep them engaged is to get them involved. Let youth/young adults be in the mix of everything. Maybe have workshops for the youth/young adults or let them work on projects with the adults. I think it would be good to also allow other youth/young adults interact and work with each other."

> "Interaction between the youth/young adults and advising adults, small amount of lecturing type conversation, focus on having their voice heard, group involvement among the youth/young adults with advising adults simply guiding discussion or participating just as much as the youth, new and fun activities (have the youth/young adults suggest activities or positive ways to interact)"

Q. 3. *What do youth/young adults gain from participating?*

> "By allowing youth/young adults to participate, it helps them to become more mindful about their everyday situations. In addition, it helps them to better understand their own needs. As a result, by knowing what they need, they can then better express to advising adults what they need to do to help them."

> "Learn more about themselves and others and that they may relate to others more than they previously thought, the youth/young adults gain awareness of others' situations, making them more understanding and less judgmental on certain topics, participation increases self-confidence and may help get over fears of public speaking, etc."

Shared Resource from a Colleague in the Field: In discussing youth participation, a colleague shared the following resource that he found particularly helpful in preparing youth for participation with groups organized by adults.

>*The Power of an Untapped Resource: Exploring Youth Representation on Your Board or Committee* – http://labor.alaska.gov/awib/Untapped_Resource.pdf

Here is an excerpt:

“...The essence of local decision making is based upon civility, personal relationships, and respect. Once the adults on the board reach out to the youth, it is up to us (the youth) to reach back – and really stretch in order to make the connection. Here are a few things for us to consider when being selected to be on a board.

1. Be confident with yourself. By whatever means, you have been selected, appointed or voted onto the board. You belong there. Sure, it will take you a few months to get comfortable in your position, just listen, watch, and learn.
2. Find a guide. There is an old saying that you can't be a guide unless you are on the journey, so find a guide, coach, or mentor who you feel comfortable with, who has some experience with the board, and who is willing to learn alongside you.
3. Be a leader. You are now in a leadership role – use this role to advance the fact that youth are capable, intelligent, and mature. People are watching you and you are now seen as an example of all youth. This does not mean that you have to be all nervous and change your whole personality. It does mean that you will be held to a higher standard than some of the youth who are not at the table.
4. Stay interested and curious. Sometimes the issues that a board faces are not that interesting – to anyone. However, the work of a board is to do all the work it is responsible for and it is up to you to take responsibility for your learning and contribution. If you look bored, the adults will have a difficult time taking you seriously.
5. Show up. Attend all the meetings, find out the dates, times, and locations. Mark them in your calendar. If you don't want to be treated as a token youth, don't act like one.
6. Use the power you have. Speak up, if you feel like you have some ideas about how to improve the flow of the meeting, the dialogue between members, and the agenda topics. Use your politeness skills to not offend members and they will listen. It is also important to know that you are one of many people, don't expect the board to do everything you say. To be treated like an equal means that your ideas are considered to be as valuable as all the others, not more so.
7. Do something. Of course you are busy. School, extracurricular activities, work, family obligations, other service commitments – your schedule is packed. However, if you want to be a leader, you will have to take on some projects and deliver what you promise through action. Get on a working subcommittee, take on a project, do some in-depth investigation of an issue or two for the board. The bottom line is that you get respect by making contributions through action.
8. The only dumb question is when you ask the same question more than three times. Everyone will understand that you are learning the lingo of Boardmanship. So, feel free to ask questions. In case you have so many questions that you would actually slow the meetings down to a crawl, jot your questions on a notepad and get your answers during the breaks. The board members will expect you to learn the lingo – so make certain that you are learning as you go. Study their language, use their language, and soon it will become second nature for you as well....”

#####

Invitation to listserv participants:

So now let's hear from you!

What do your local schools do to include youth participation in improving student/learning supports?

Share lessons learned. Comments. Recommendations.

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

#####

**Featured Set of Center Resources for
>Youth development and engagement**

For a range of resources from our Center and from other on this important concern, see the Center Quick Find on *Youth Development* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/youthdev.htm>
It provides direct links to Center resources and to a variety of other online work. See for example the following Center resources:

- >About Promoting Youth Development in Schools – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/yd.pdf>
- >Engaging the Strengths of Families, Youth, and Communities in Rebuilding Learning Supports – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/spring07.pdf>
- >Promoting Youth Development and Addressing Barriers – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newsletter/fall99.pdf>
- >Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning at School – <http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf>

#####

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THE INTERCHANGES BECOME!
Sign-up for the Listserv mailings – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.
 We post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange* on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm> and on *Facebook* (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)

*For information about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

See report from the National Summit on the ***Every Student Succeeds Act and Learning Supports: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching to Enhance Equity of Opportunity*** – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/summitreport.pdf> .

And note that our new book detailing the prototypes and related resources is now available.

