



Maximum

Youth

Involvement

The Complete Gameplan
for Community Action

by
WENDY SCHAEZEL LESKO

MAXIMUM YOUTH INVOLVEMENT!

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by
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YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

INTRODUCTION

There is reason for plenty of optimism in the arena of youth civic engagement and community change as more organizations pursue intergenerational collaboration. Certainly the adult-driven model continues to be dominant but lots of experimentation is underway in urban centers as well as rural areas where young people and grownups team up together.

No one set of recommendations will work for every situation and community, especially with the explosion of so-called positive youth development programs, youth empowerment initiatives, and youth advisory councils. In addition there is another trend gaining in popularity which I term "youth infusion," where young people are involved in every conceivable way—as volunteers and paid community organizers, as facilitators and trainers, as conference planners, and as full-fledged members on a board of directors. Promising practices are beginning to emerge on effective intergenerational advocacy that result in changing community norms and laws. While there is no cookie cutter model, this manual describes approaches that can be adapted to an array of advocacy campaigns, youth programs, and organizations. This resource provides guiding principles and clues for those exploring the feasibility of collaborating with youths or trying to expand the role of young people as community problem-solvers, particularly in the public policy arena.

The Q&A format is intended to speed your search for answers to specific questions depending on your stage in the process and particular needs.

- **Chapter I** offers a philosophical framework outlining the benefits and the impact of young people as agents for change. It refutes the view: "Let kids be kids" or the more cynical version —"Kids should be seen and not heard." These attitudes are widely held by most adults and by the vast majority of young people who are not yet convinced that they can be agents for change.
- **Chapter II** moves to the nuts and bolts necessary to team up with young people on a specific advocacy campaign, including the qualities and skills of adult collaborators.
- **Chapter III** maps out recruitment strategies, along with ongoing outreach to cope with natural attrition.
- **Chapter IV** provides a menu of advocacy skill-building activities, tapping the underutilized talents and special influence of young activists.
- **Chapter V** details common challenges such as poor group dynamics, staff turnover, adults who control or co-opt the agenda, and a stalled campaign. Overlap may exist in some areas due to the non-linear nature of this manual and the way in which it is supposed to be utilized.
- The **Appendix** includes supplementary materials including a variety of reproducible handouts.

The reader will notice that throughout this manual I have chosen to use the plural "youths" as opposed to the collective singular "youth" when describing young people. The reason for this is a philosophical one, underscoring the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT 's commitment to recognizing the multitude of opinions, attitudes, and experiences that young people across America, as well as around the world, embody. Too often society is quick to generalize about youths, viewing them as one monolithic group. It is insensitive to think that the English language recognizes the individual among its "adults" which there is no collective term for, but does not pay youths the same respect. As a result, the plural is used throughout this manual, emphasizing this spirit of individualism.

The YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT offers several complimentary materials to this manual including our "Influential Young Advocates" video that features brief news clips of some of the success stories described in the Appendix of this manual. Portions of this 17-minute videotape can be shown to different audiences to reinforce the unique contributions and clout of those under the age of 18 who comprise a fourth of the population. Our most popular resource for teens and tweens as well as adult advisors and collaborators is *Youth! The 26% Solution*. This paperback is full of strategies and surveys, petitions, letters to the editor, sound bites, news releases, and other examples of youth-produced tools to weigh in effectively on public policy matters at the local, state, and federal levels.

Good luck in your pioneering efforts. It is our genuine hope that this manual will prove effective in maximizing youth involvement and more specifically, youth input, influence and impact in community action campaigns. In the words of Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers, whom I was lucky to work for in the 1970s, "Si se puede...Yes, it can be done!"

Wendy Schaetzel Lesko
Executive Director

Chapter I

BENEFITS OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

“Millennials, born in or after 1982, are unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse. More important, they are beginning to manifest a wide array of positive social habits that older Americans no longer associate with youth, including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty, and good conduct. Only a few years from now, this can-do youth revolution will overwhelm the cynics and pessimists. Over the next decade, the Millennial Generation will entirely recast the image of youth from downbeat and alienated to upbeat and engaged—with potentially seismic consequences for America... For Millennials, this shift will focus on the needs of the community more than the individual, so it is likely to induce large-scale institutional change. Thus, the word ‘rebellion’ is not entirely appropriate. The word ‘revolution’ might better catch the spirit of what lies ahead.”

~ Neil Howe and William Strauss
Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation

“So far adults have called the shots, but now it’s time to build the world with children. Your voices will be heard, I promise.”

~ Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General

“There is a growing recognition that young people are a key piston in the twin engines of civic engagement and community development.”

~ Karen Pittman, Forum for Youth Investment

We begin with a solid argument about the reasons for young people to be central players in advocacy efforts. Why so many adults are uneasy about this type of volunteerism and community action is addressed. This chapter also refutes the popular justification that young people should learn about civic life in order to be prepared for adulthood. Instead, the emphasis is the potential community impact due to direct youth involvement. Skills and experiences derived from community organizing certainly can result in positive youth development. Furthermore, there is a new viewpoint suggesting that adults also grow as a result of their collaboration with young people. Finally, examples of different levels of intergenerational alliance are introduced in this opening chapter.

What are the arguments for maximum youth involvement?

The long tradition of making decisions for youths without youths has failed. Collaborating *with* young people is gaining acceptance by youth-serving nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and other decision-making institutions across the country. Intergenerational teamwork goes far beyond reducing age segregation, promoting diversity, and providing opportunities for youths. Seeking input and involvement by one quarter of the population—those under age 18—makes sense purely as a civil rights matter in the pursuit of a more inclusive democracy.

Equally important, youth infusion can enhance capacity, credibility, and clout. Adolescents and even pre-teens can increase the capacity in a synergistic, multi-faceted advocacy campaign that seeks to change community norms and pursue specific public policies. Young people offer an array of perspectives and firsthand experiences that lend credibility to the movement. And even though they are not yet old enough to vote, young activists wield surprising clout. Their influence can extend far beyond their peer group.

SIX SPHERES OF YOUTH POWER

- Peers and younger peers
- Parents and family members
- Principals and school administrators
- Private sector (retailers, restaurants, etc.)
- Press (newspapers, television networks, etc.)
- Public officials, politicians, and other policy-makers.

More elaboration follows on why young people should be involved in meaningful and significant ways in advocacy campaigns.

#1: YOUTHS CAN SERVE AS ROLE MODELS AND PEER EDUCATORS.

Peer education is perhaps the most widely recognized and accepted role for young activists. It is no secret that kids listen to kids. Teenagers as well as pre-teens can be excellent teachers, credible messengers, and effective recruiters. Many believe the real benefit is that peer educators practice what they preach and avoid risky behaviors.

#2: YOUTHS CAN INFLUENCE THEIR PARENTS AND OTHER ADULTS.

Sons and daughters have more influence on their elders than is acknowledged. Persuading a relative to quit smoking or prodding a parent to register to vote are examples of the positive domino effect that children can have on grownups.

#3: YOUTHS CAN DIAGNOSE PROBLEMS AND PROVIDE REALITY CHECKS.

Young people have firsthand knowledge about their school and community

environment. Youth collaborators can collect data adults cannot obtain from other youths, and can offer a pragmatic client perspective to data analysis and planning. Geoffrey Canada, author of *Fist Stick Knife Gun*, writes, "Children are the real experts in violence prevention...they are the first ones to ask if you really want to know what works and what doesn't."

#4: YOUTHS CAN CHALLENGE CONVENTIONAL THINKING. These underage allies offer fresh perspectives and imaginative ideas. "Children everywhere can stop us short with their unnerving moments of innocent good sense," writes Robert Coles in *The Political Life of Children*. Adults wouldn't even consider trying to do what these kids were attempting. "To them everything is possible," remarked an aide to Utah Senator Orrin Hatch after meeting with 6th graders who lobbied successfully for a new federal grant program for youth groups.

#5: YOUTHS CAN ATTRACT NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE. Students who write letters to the editor, pitch a story to a producer, or send out news releases have an advantage. A sound bite by a teenager stands a better chance of being quoted in an article or over the airwaves than speeches by experts and other articulate, knowledgeable advocates.

#6: YOUTHS CAN CAPTURE THE ATTENTION OF DECISION-MAKERS. Concerned young people, whose motives are rarely questioned, can motivate power brokers to take action. One public health advocate claimed, "Without youth on our coalition, parents as well as school officials and politicians would not listen to me."

#7: YOUTHS CAN PURSUE UNORTHODOX TACTICS AND CIRCUMVENT ROADBLOCKS. Young people can take advantage of their age and gain access to VIPs without scheduled meetings or abiding by conventional protocol. Painted faces, costumes, and visual props are among the creative tactics that help youths communicate their concerns. Setbacks and opposition may increase young activists' determination, due partly to their sense of invincibility and idealism.

#8: YOUTHS CAN MOTIVATE OTHERS. Certainly teaming up with young people can be frustrating but when it works, the benefits are stunning. Professionals, from teachers to CEOs who serve with young people on a board of directors, as well as members of an intergenerational coalition, frequently rave about how the meetings are more lively, the adults are more polite to one another, and that youth members help forge consensus. Another potential is the positive energizing impact on politicians and other decision-makers. A state senator in Texas said, "The children motivated me. I'm going to do all I can to help get the bill passed." (This student campaign resulted in amending the state law to allow local zoning boards to reduce the number of liquor stores.)

Why do some adults fear youth activism?

“I haven’t noticed a rush to ask students for their views [on the idea of school uniforms]. Unless kids are seen as robots, or inmates unworthy of consulting, their thinking might be revealing.”

~ Colman McCarthy, Center for Teaching Peace

There is much resistance to the enlightened view that “kids should be *seen and heard*.” The concept of youths as agents for change still is not an accepted norm. Beyond non-controversial campaigns such as the official state bird or non-partisan voter registration drives, many cringe at the thought of “youngsters” participating in the public policy arena, especially when it involves politicians who rank below lawyers and insurance agents in terms of trust. For those adults who never have advocated before their school board, county council, state legislature or U.S. Congress, it is completely understandable for them to be uneasy about encouraging young people to venture into something akin to a lion’s den. Yet, the notion of maximum youth involvement in these arenas that determine local, state and federal laws is a natural extension of citizenship and participatory democracy.

Activism simply means taking positive direct action to achieve a political or social end. The democratic process—especially when people square off over divisive problems—is not necessarily polarizing. Controversial issues can be approached in positive and exploratory ways or by “stepping into someone else’s shoes.” Thorough research, discussion, and analysis are guaranteed to reveal many sides to a given issue, even one as seemingly innocuous as speed bumps. An emphasis on dialogue rather than debate reduces the tendency to target the adversary’s weakness or demonize the other side. Today’s students are taught these critical thinking skills along with cooperative learning and conflict resolution.

Fear of failure is another reason why some adults may be inclined to steer young people away from the public policy arena. But setbacks and defeat often strengthen the resolve of young activists. One middle school student was warned repeatedly, “Don’t expect to win” but his attitude was “You’ll never get anything done if you don’t try.” This is where an adolescent’s sense of experimentation and invincibility can work to one’s advantage. Advocacy is an adventure. The fun is not knowing what will happen. There’s excitement in meeting new people their own age from other schools and neighborhoods who share their concerns. Furthermore, young people may gravitate to advocacy work because of their desire to join the “real adult world” and try to influence the power brokers. These same teenagers, who normally may seek to fit in with their peers, often seek to stand out as outspoken advocates and leaders on compelling community concerns.

Another reason for the reluctance for including young people is that advocacy can be another name for “lobbying,” a word that sends chills down the backs of community-based

organizations and government agencies. Jeopardizing a nonprofit organization's tax-exempt status is a justifiable concern (see Chapter II, Organizational Readiness).

Professional lobbyists can be wary of amateurs who may be either politically naive or too independent-minded. Organizations like the National Network for Youth have a solid track record of maximizing youth involvement during constituent visits to congressional offices as well as testifying at legislative hearings. Seventeen-year-old runaway Janna Koschene of Colorado presented a vivid account of sleeping in cars and overnight shelters before a Senate Judiciary subcommittee. She also included in her testimony detailed recommendations based on her own positive experiences at a daytime drop-in center for homeless teens in Denver. After the formal hearing, Ms. Koschene had lengthy conversations with several senators and subcommittee staff. At a time of budget cuts, Congress voted a modest increase for federal funds earmarked for crisis shelters and transitional living programs.

Peer educators may be accustomed to teaching their friends and classmates but these informed experts are ideally suited to share put their knowledge with politicians and other public policymakers. For example, teen HIV counselors can be instrumental in voicing their recommendations about school health curricula, school-based health centers, community clinics, and government services. Peer counselors along with service providers and policy advocates can and should collaborate. Together this team can increase community awareness, mobilize support, and effectively advocate for societal change.

What is the impact of advocacy activities on youth development?

The benefits of participation by adolescents are numerous and extend far beyond providing after school activities and keeping them out of trouble. Engaging young people in ways that respect their ideas, foster their initiative, and involve them in significant organizational and strategic decisions dovetail with the "5Cs" rubric for positive youth development as outlined by Karen Pittman of the Forum for Youth Investment (www.forumforyouthinvestment.org):

- confidence (a sense of purpose/future, self-worth, usefulness)
- character (a sense of responsibility, empathy, spirituality)
- competence (a sense of mastery, resourcefulness)
- connection (a sense of belonging, membership, safety)
- contribution (a sense of sharing, power, ownership)

Instead of rare interactions with adults, involving youths in advocacy work can result in healthy intergenerational relationships. Instead of the mixed message to students to be good citizens but don't rock the boat, young people can be instrumental in solving problems, such as changing certain school policies. Instead of young people feeling alienated and disenfranchised, they can experience connections with the broader community beyond their own peer group. Youths also gain an impressive repertoire of critical thinking and

communication competencies; including analyzing and distilling information, packaging research findings, persuading others to join the cause, debating, mixing with diverse audiences, and demonstrating perseverance.

Some advocacy groups and coalitions concentrate on only their agenda without caring much about the well being of their staff and volunteer activists. The result can be burn out or disillusionment. On the other hand, many youth-focused organizations view individual growth and development as the ultimate objective with minimal expectations of actual community impact. The typical comment such as "this campaign was a great learning experience for the kids" undermines the actual contribution of youths as change agents. The ideal, of course, is to pursue a course of action that achieves results and also proves beneficial to all the individuals involved.

Another potential conflict with certain youth development models is the heavy emphasis on risk reduction that can collide with the concept of youth empowerment. For example, the Search Institute's 40 Assets (www.search-institute.org) identifies adult and community interventions necessary for young people to grow up to be competent, caring, and healthy. Indeed, adolescent means "to nourish" and certainly parents, teachers, and other grownups are absolutely vital to this process. Critics contend this model is "adultist" and essentially a set of protective factors designed primarily for white middle class families. Here are just two examples of the Search Institute's Assets followed by our recommended rewording in italics:

"Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth."

Young person knows adults in the community who value and respect their ideas.

"Young people are given useful roles in the community."

Young people chose to engage in meaningful and significant roles throughout the community.

In the category called "Positive Values," the judgments appear to be unilateral dictums, such as Asset #31: "Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs." While certain healthy behaviors are appropriate expectations, generally people feel empowered when they make choices freely and exercise some autonomy over personal, social, economic, and political forces affecting different situations in their lives. Many who rely on this youth development model have difficulties shifting from a traditional adult supervisory role to co-equal intergenerational collaboration.

Partnering with young people should not be based on the desire to fix or shape them but to view them—whether they are honor roll students or dropouts—as distinct individuals and independent thinkers with a myriad of talents that can augment an organization's capacity. Consequently, youth development is a likely by-product but not an end in itself. The goal of involving young people in advocacy efforts is to get the ideas—including contrary views—from a constituency that has been excluded in the past.

How often do young activists surpass adolescent developmental benchmarks?

“Almost all policies for youth are based on pathology; little is said about adolescent zeal, energy, and idealism. Though our tools for finding and eliciting pathology are sharp, our tools for finding and eliciting strength are blunt.”

~ John Calhoun, formerly head of the National Crime Prevention Council

“[My experience] has left me with immutable optimism about the potential of young adolescent children. Given learning opportunities that truly challenge, the responsibility to exercise meaningful choices, and respect for their ideas and dignity, youngsters are capable of tremendous commitment and dazzling originality. Underneath the confounding, frustrating, and often exhausting surface, there lies an indomitable human spirit, capable of the exceptional.”

~ C. Stevenson, *Teaching Ten to Fourteen Year Olds*

Anecdotal evidence collected by the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT would suggest that the intelligence and capacity of a broad age range of youths engaged in policy advocacy defy theories about the social maturity and cognitive abilities of this age group. Our national clearinghouse has compiled dozens of examples of young adolescents, including pre-teens, who have grasped the nuances of an amendment that would gut legislation or understood the potential for negative publicity resulting from a student rally (see Appendix, “Success Stories”).

Prior to the 1940s, young people were accorded responsibilities and valued for their productive contributions on the farm, in the home, and in the community. Then the term “teenager” came into common usage and “adolescence” became the label for pre-adulthood. Negative stereotypes today mean few young people are credited with being able to think logically, process information, and engage in abstract reasoning. Many adults are amazed that students can write a complete sentence and for this reason, young activists sometimes dumb down their testimony and don’t include a more sophisticated vocabulary such as the term “preemption” to avoid the assumption that someone else wrote their speeches.

Providing a variety of opportunities along with ongoing advocacy training are important to erase these attitudes of inferiority. Young activists need to be given tools and resources because if they are not adequately supported, their missteps and failures reinforce the prevailing stereotypes. Adults who witness the powerful impact of young advocates—such as an ‘a ha’ moment like observing a teen handle a TV reporter’s questions deftly—can transform the biggest skeptic into the leading champion of maximum youth involvement.

And perceptions seem to be changing. Teenage webmasters to poetry slam artists are being recognized for their talents. Internet-savvy youths are getting paid to train adults on the applications of this technology. With more opportunities for young people, the physical and mental competencies of this age group will not be relegated to the classroom or to their peer group, but realigned with larger societal roles and responsibilities.

Intergenerational teamwork can usher in a new era where there is less age segregation. It will no longer be uncommon to hear Adalis Santiago, a soft-spoken girl from Massachusetts who got the

Springfield City Council to respond to complaints about a dump outside her school, exclaim: "No one has ever listened to me before!" One might change the mantra "It takes a village to raise a child" to "It also takes children to raise a village."

Youth Infusion in Major Community Collaborative

The Mosaic Youth Center (www.mosaicyouthcenter.com) outside the Twin Cities in Minnesota has a computer lab, performing arts space, a youth-run food service business, career planning, medical and mental health services, a 10-bed shelter for homeless youth and much more. This idea emerged at a student forum back in 1996 and young people were involved during every step of the planning process.

This ambitious project with a five million dollar price tag and powerful partners that include the Robbinsdale Area Redesign, Northwest YMCA, Independent School District 281, Annex Teen Medical Clinic, Fairview Recovery Services did not minimize the youth role. Over five years, the primary stakeholders/customers were central to designing the blueprint. The Board of Directors consisted of 60% youth (enrolled in high school or between ages 14 and 19) and 40% adults. Optional stipends were available to youth and adult board members ranging from \$40 to \$100 per month, based on their time commitment and responsibilities. The full-time coordinator was hired from a pool of 40 applicants by a committee of half a dozen youth and two adults. An intergenerational nomination committee interviewed applicants to fill board vacancies. The youth board members had a visible presence throughout the community, for example, hosting a chili dinner that attracted elected officials and businesses to speaking before the Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs. Biweekly meetings, co-chaired by a youth member from each of two largest high schools, worked through a packed agenda.

One significant organizational challenge was transportation. A contract with a local cab company made it easier for youths to attend meetings since many live in the seven towns – the geographical area that Mosaic serves. Food, an absolute essential especially for 6 p.m. meetings, can eat a hole in the \$500,000 planning grant budget, but this intergenerational team found ways to keep this expense down. Retreats that brought together all the board members and community partners were effective in terms of work output and also promoting group cohesion in this broad-based coalition that drew people from many different community sectors.

The Coordinator's determined effort to maintain contact with youth board members who have graduated from high school or moved out of the area has helped maintain the memory bank. Half of the current youth members were recruited as 9th graders that enhanced the continuity. This planning project demonstrated how young people from all backgrounds from immigrants to a homeless teen can and should be the lead architects. In the words of one former board member, "Mosaic works for one reason: everyone involved treats one another as equals."

What is the impact of meaningful youth involvement on adults?

In addition to the emphasis on positive youth development, there is a growing body of research to examine positive adult development. *Youth in Decision-Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations*, by the Innovation Center, concludes that adults benefit from working with youths in four primary ways:

- 1) Adults experienced the competence of youth first-hand, and began to perceive young people as legitimate, crucial contributors to organizational decision-making processes.
- 2) Working with youth served to enhance the commitment and energy of adults to the organization.
- 3) Adults felt more effective and more confident in working with and relating to youth.
- 4) Adults came to understand the needs and concerns of youth, and became more attuned to programming issues, making them more likely to reach outside the organization to share their knowledge and insights. They gained a stronger sense of community connectedness.

The YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT does not mean to suggest that intergenerational collaboration is all rosy. Take any group of people or coalition and there are bound to be problems. Then there is the need to continually motivate volunteers who can walk away at a moment's notice. Add young folks to this equation and the challenges are off the charts. It is really unfair to expect those who have limited interactions with young people to appreciate the potential payoff. It would be hard for them to understand the excitement of a social studies teacher who declared, after fifth graders testified before the state legislature and succeeded in defeating a bill to preempt localities from enacting municipal ordinances, that this advocacy project was "One of the most exciting times in my 27 years of teaching!"

Adults who have had good experiences working with youths talk about their renewed passion. Commitment increases partly because adults hope young people will realize the impact they actually can have as minors. Even amid frustrating moments, there's a rare kind of energy not found at most adult strategy sessions.

Another claim is that adults, in general, behave better in a mixed age group. A West Virginia coalition focused on reproductive health was mired in debate but several adults credited the young members who helped the group find common ground and pursue concrete action. Some adults also welcome being prodded by young people to think outside the box and try unconventional tactics for circumventing traditional barriers. "What I love most is when adults say, 'We've tried that before and know it cannot be done,' and then we prove how it can happen if young people are involved," says John Librett when he worked for the Utah Department of Health. He collaborated with students in organizing a huge rally at the statehouse that resulted in a historic victory after legislation had been defeated during the previous three years.

Chapter II

ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

“It is individuals who change societies, give birth to ideas; who, standing out against tides of opinion, change them...It is my belief that an intelligent and forward-looking society would do everything possible to produce such individuals instead of, as happens very often, suppressing them.”

~ Doris Lessing

“Rather than standing or speaking for children we need to stand with children speaking for themselves. We don’t need a political movement for children...that very paradigm underestimates the tremendous energy, boldness and creativity in solving problems that young people can bring to the effort. We cannot afford to continue excluding them, or tokenistically involving them in our campaigns on their behalf. Are we prepared to listen to children and young people? To bring them into meetings where their “welfare” is the agenda? To change the culture of these meetings to accommodate them? To give our expertise to them in helping them formulate the policy agendas...to build environments and policies for our collective future.”

~ Sandra Meucci

While an organization may be interested in intergenerational collaboration, it is important first to assess the feasibility. Some organizations might be restricted by resources or budget constraints, which do not allow them to involve young people as much as they envision. Others might struggle with finding a balance between the organizational strategic plan and the principle of youth infusion. While the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT encourages maximum youth involvement, it also understands that each organization is different and does not recommend putting the cart before the horse. Rushing this process increases the likelihood of disappointment, potentially dooming future efforts since a bad experience can reinforce prevailing attitudes held by many adults that collaborating with young people is not worth the time and money.

This chapter provides guidelines for organizations considering or expanding the process of collaborating with young people. It looks at the practicalities of making this transition, from IRS restrictions to staffing arrangements. Furthermore, it describes character traits and skills adults should possess to increase the success of partnering with youths.

How can youth infusion be introduced to an organization or coalition?

“The greatest difficulty in the world is not for people to accept new ideas, but to make them forget about old ideas.”

~ John Maynard Keynes

If there has been little or no history of collaborating with young people, here are some steps to consider:

- To gauge attitudes within the organization, use a simple questionnaire to help assess the current thinking of the staff (see "Sample Anonymous Survey" in the Appendix). Responses to questions such as this one can prompt candid conversations:

Youths will enhance our organizational capacity.

Circle one: Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

- Get the entire staff to watch and discuss the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT video, "Influential Young Advocates." Also introduce and discuss relevant "Success Stories" in the Appendix of this manual.
- "Sample Questionnaire: Youth Roles," in the Appendix is another survey that can spark an honest exchange of views about which aspects of an advocacy campaign could be done by young people. Many adults without prior experience collaborating with teens just haven't ever imagined the breadth of responsibilities that many young people perform very effectively, often with little or no formal training.
- Invite youth and adult representatives from other organizations to share their experiences. Encourage a frank assessment about the positive outcomes as well as the negative ramifications of intergenerational partnership.

Some staff may not be forthcoming about either their resistance or resentment to the notion of youth infusion. Others may find it difficult to conceive that young people would want to be involved, especially since they would be collaborating with adults. These misgivings are to be expected and likely to linger. Rarely do adults become instant converts until they've seen for themselves the powerful impact of young activists.

Part of this exploratory process needs to focus on an infrastructure to support youth involvement that also will mesh with the institutional framework and accomplish the goals of the organization. The decision about the extent of youth inclusion will determine resources and staffing. Consideration of different models with varying degrees of youth involvement may be helpful at this preliminary stage of deliberations. Five levels of inclusion are described in the answer to the very next question. A more general discussion can center on the following approaches that range from traditional youth participation to power sharing.

DECISION-MAKING APPROACH	TYPICAL SITUATION
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Adult-directed youth program	Adults run the show, usually conducting the meetings, doing training sessions, and choreographing most phases of a campaign.
Adult-guided youth-led approach	Adults introduce the agenda but youths have some latitude within those parameters. Adults oversee and try to make sure campaign stays on course.
Youth-driven adult-supported	Young activists are given access to meeting space, equipment, budget, and possibly staff support to design and pursue their own campaign with adults offering advice from the sidelines.
Independent youth-run	Youths start a new organization or launch their own advocacy campaign. Adult-led organizations can explore linkages, similar to alliances with other groups in coalition building efforts.
Intergenerational collaboration	Adults and youths work as co-pilots in developing and implementing a campaign. Several youths, alongside adults, hold paid positions and are involved in all aspects of an initiative.

Each approach tends to attract different adult as well as youth personalities. For example, traditional student leaders accustomed to interacting with school administrators and other authority figures may work well with adults who exercise considerable control over the agenda. Less compromising youths not seeking adult approval are apt to be drawn to an organization where adults assume low-key administrative responsibilities. Alienated teens may gain a sense of hope when mixed with a few experienced youth activists, particularly non-traditional leaders, along with smart, sensitive adults whom they grow to trust. Once accustomed to directing an advocacy initiative, empowered youths will rebel if reins are tightened later on. If adults within the organization exert more control, expect turnover.

A respective symbiotic relationship often characterizes successful and sustainable community change initiatives.

What are the different levels of intergenerational collaboration to consider?

“I feel uncomfortable about working through the association because it’s really an adult-run organization that uses the youth committee as figureheads.”

~ Anonymous high school student

Many collaborative approaches that allow an organization to experiment with the concept of partnering with youths either on an ad hoc or permanent basis are outlined below. Some of these structures provide such a limited role that they amount to little more than token youth involvement. One way to judge intergenerational teamwork is to use this crude scale:

- Level 0 (Authoritarian) - No collaboration
- Level 1 (Paternalistic) - Limited exchange
- Level 2 (Consultative) - Parallel strategic planning
- Level 3 (Democratic) - Shared decision-making
- Level 4 (Empowering) - Youth infusion

Of course, the degree of power sharing depends largely on the individuals involved, not simply the infrastructure that restricts or fosters youth infusion. The following table outlines numerous types of collaboration and the level of collaboration under which they fall.

TYPE OF COLLABORATION <i>(Level)</i>	DESCRIPTION	AVOIDING POTENTIAL PITFALLS
Focus Group <i>(Level 0)</i>	An informal focus group comprised of young people provides input to those in charge of formulating recommendations and/or decisions about youth programs, policies, media advocacy campaigns, etc.	Hearing it straight from the horse’s mouth can be useful, but don’t expect a handful of teenagers to speak for their entire generation. Every individual is different and unlikely to provide an accurate picture of the group as a whole.
Mini-Grant Program <i>(Level 1 or 2)</i>	Such a program offers modest financial resources, usually between \$100 to \$2,000, to individual youths or a youth group, who apply for mini-grants for a specific project or advocacy initiative.	Instead of having adults be the ones to decide which grant proposals to fund, include at least an equal number of youths with adequate training to analyze youth-designed grant applications and select the winners.

<p style="text-align: center;">TYPE OF COLLABORATION <i>(Level)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DESCRIPTION</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AVOIDING POTENTIAL PITFALLS</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Internship <i>(Level: varies)</i></p>	<p>Most intern positions provide a modest stipend to help cover transportation and other expenses. Responsibilities range from staff support to coordinating significant projects such as ongoing recruiting or helping to write grants.</p>	<p>Insufficient training can limit intern(s) to an insignificant entry level role. With ongoing mentoring and the opportunity for added responsibilities, internships can benefit both the individual and the organization.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Youth Advisory Committee <i>(Level 1 or 2)</i></p>	<p>A youth advisory committee (YAC) or similarly named group, usually is a component of an adult-led effort where the YAC makes non-binding recommendations to an adult board or coalition composed of professionals and volunteers. Many youths prefer the freedom and synergy of a committee composed entirely of their peers to the slower pace of drawn out adult meetings.</p>	<p>Since an advisory committee does not call the shots, there is the risk of alienating the youth participants if and when the adults ignore or override YAC recommendations. Limitations on the authority of a YAC should be spelled out from the very beginning. Ongoing communications and a liaison are crucial between the YAC and the entity it is supposed to advise.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Youth Commission <i>(Level 2 or 3)</i></p>	<p>Some youth commissions are composed of adults but an increasing number now are made up solely of young commissioners who represent different communities and have considerable autonomy to plan and implement programs. In some cases, a major responsibility is to make recommendations to the city council, superintendent, etc. Usually a commission receives financial resources and staff support from the host organization.</p>	<p>If youth members are appointed by the Mayor, Superintendent, etc., this can undermine their independence. Commissioners are faced with the challenge of representing the views of diverse populations and non-traditional leaders. Commissioners need to be fully aware of any restrictions imposed by funders, etc. Effective staff liaisons can help foster cross-age ties; otherwise this entity can remain on a parallel track and rarely intersect with adult-led efforts.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Paid Youth Organizers, Staff & Consultants <i>(Level: varies)</i></p>	<p>Stipends for specific projects and permanent paid positions increase the role of young people in day-to-day operations. Job responsibilities, pay scale, and expectations of professionalism are the equivalent of other employees. Flexible schedules can reduce turnover and maintain staff stability.</p>	<p>Ongoing training and a supportive work environment are necessary. Opportunities to earn respect from older colleagues benefit everyone. Attrition is to be expected with younger staff; however, a ladder of opportunity with increased responsibility and compensation can enhance continuity.</p>

(Continued)

TYPE OF COLLABORATION <i>(Level)</i>	DESCRIPTION	AVOIDING POTENTIAL PITFALLS
Youth Members on Board of Directors <i>(Level 3 or 4)</i>	<p>One young person appointed to serve in a decision-making capacity on a citizens' task force, study group, or board of directors is increasingly common. Typically new members (not just youths) receive an orientation and may be matched with a mentor or 'board buddy' to allow all board members to develop an adequate foundation to participate as equals. Some youth board members, however, do not have voting rights which makes this position advisory.</p>	<p>If there is only one youth member, this individual is likely to feel isolated from the rest of the board. To avoid tokenism, increase the number of youth seats with voting rights, perhaps to one-third or even a majority, depending on the mission of the organization. Consider two-year terms or longer to give more time to get familiar with board issues. The culture of the board meetings should be made more 'youth friendly,' which may also benefit adult members.</p>
Youth Committee plus Youth & Staff as Board Members <i>(Level 3 or 4)</i>	<p>A youth committee allows young activists to set their own agenda and proceed at their own pace, rather than be immersed in the planning process of the adult-directed advocacy campaign. Staff, including young people who hold paid positions, provide the link between the youth committee and host organization, promoting ongoing communication and coordination. Several youths also serve on the board of directors.</p>	<p>This youth advocacy engine can perform efficiently, but it may steer in different directions than its adult component. Joint strategy meetings that are co-facilitated by youths and adults are helpful. A shared mission, the constant exchange of information, mutual respect, and trust between both of these decision-making structures are essential to carry out an effective multi-faceted advocacy campaign.</p>
Intergenerational Structure <i>(Level 4)</i>	<p>This advanced level of collaboration has no defined roles for participation based on age. The adult-youth ratio is evident throughout the infrastructure in volunteer as well as paid part-time and full-time positions, and youths are full-fledged voting members of the executive committee or board of trustees.</p>	<p>Adults and professionals with in-depth understanding of the issues but unaccustomed to working with youths may be reluctant to share decision-making power. Sensitivity to this issue as well as making logistical adjustments (no meetings when students are in school, etc.) are vital.</p>

What organizational commitment and funding are necessary?

Leaders within an organization's hierarchy who have demonstrated a willingness to experiment and put themselves on the line for innovative approaches will be vital to winning support for the necessary infrastructure supports and resources. Maximum youth involvement has to be a priority. Effective partnering is deliberate and intentional.

- **COMMITMENT.** Strong organizational support from key senior level staff is essential. Partnering with volunteers is demanding; partnering with young volunteers is even more challenging and requires a savvy adult manager. Once the novelty wears off, fatigue sets in or conflicts arise. Steadfast leadership is necessary to maintaining a supportive climate. We all know most efforts to include youths have a tough time competing with other organizational priorities for several reasons. First and foremost, an initiative involving "kids" doesn't stack up as all that serious. Those adults who collaborate with youths often don't get the respect from their peers, are viewed by many as lowly summer camp counselors, and receive low pay. This is one reason for the nationwide effort to professionalize "youth work." Another challenge is cultivating trust, particularly with an intergenerational mix of diverse people. Regular and frequent interactions between high level staff and individual young activists can be vital at maintaining organizational support. Staff retreats, office parties, conferences, etc. build those all-important relationships. Furthermore, it is wise to remember that community change usually takes years—not days to realize. A strategic plan for youth infusion that outlines specific objectives over a four-year period reinforces the long-term commitment.

- **FUNDING.** A bare bones start-up budget can be dangerous. Inadequate funding will mean you cannot attract a talented team of youths and adults. No money for transportation, food for meetings, ongoing training, and retreats can sabotage the effort. Failure with a poorly funded pilot project can doom future efforts to partner with young people. A line item in a multi-year budget for youth infusion allows for program expansion and improves the likelihood for staff stability. Lack of retention of both youths and adults is a chief reason why such an initiative does not succeed. Important in-kind support might include meeting space, use of computers, and other office equipment. The YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT can suggest organizations with a track record that can provide help on formulating a budget, identifying grant opportunities, and sharing best practices.

The challenges are similar whether it is an advocacy campaign on a specific legislative initiative, a coalition planning a downtown rally, or perhaps a youth commission making recommendations to local government officials or to a board of trustees. While youth recruitment and retention, liability, and other logistical difficulties have to be addressed, there is no substitute on an organization's bottom line commitment and respect for the concept of youth infusion as discussed earlier.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
Attitude: The stated goal or unspoken philosophy is: “We want to <i>use kids</i> for this event and tap their creative ideas and energy.”	The guiding principle is to involve young people as equal partners in significant and substantive ways. This mission has clear and consistent support from the top.
Afterthought: Young people are asked for their input even though key decisions have been made.	A diverse group of young people is invited to participate in the decision-making process at the ground floor.
Add-on: Youth workers have many other job responsibilities: A common complaint is “Only 25% of my time is set aside for working with youth.” Another perception is “I’m already doing that with kids” (for instance, traditional adult-directed youth development activities).	Adult-youth collaboration is recognized as vital but also labor intensive and emotionally demanding. Adequate staff time signals to the entire organization and young people involved that this is a priority. Youth infusion represents a quantum leap from traditional participatory youth programming.
9-5 Schedule: Youth workers are expected to follow the standard workday. Meetings are scheduled when young people are at school or work. There is little appreciation for work done on weeknights and weekends.	Flextime recognizes that working with youths usually occurs at 9pm rather than 9am. Weekend activities including overnight retreats mean adults will get other days off. Comp time should be understood by other staff and supervisors.
Inadequate Budget: Money is budgeted for a one-time event or program but there is little funding for follow-up. Enormous amounts of time and energy are spent to secure donations for food, etc. as well as arranging transportation and chaperones. The pay differential is significant between those who work on the front lines with youths and other staff who manage youth programs.	Wait to begin collaborating with youths until funding is assured. Make sure the budget covers enough staff positions and the compensation is at a level to retain these youth workers. Snacks, travel, overnight retreats, conference calls, and other costs associated with youth infusion are essential. Make available discretionary dollars for unanticipated costs.
Few Opportunities: A bare bones budget means youth workers and youths cannot attend conferences, receive training and acquire new skills. The result is adult turnover, often a major setback for the initiative. Young people in volunteer positions with responsibilities but the adults with same duties receive compensation. (The justification is the students are getting great experience.)	A continual stream of opportunities through varied experiences may be the single most effective way to maintain committed young people and also hold onto talented youth workers. Stipends and part-time job opportunities for youths can boost organizational capacity and demand accountability that isn’t possible with volunteers.
Incompatibility: The person primarily responsible for working with youths may not relate well to adolescents (domineering, divisive, dismisses ideas proposed by youths, or the other extreme--passive); lacks prior experience in advocacy and appropriate training.	If tensions persist, other staff should be selected for this crucial position. This can be a tough job to fill. Many adults, even teachers, may not adapt to shared decision-making with volunteers, especially youths. Avoid hiring folks with lackluster personalities and low energy.
Isolation & Burnout: Often only one person carries the entire load for a youth infusion program while the majority of the staff concentrates on funders, business partners, etc. and have no few dealings with the young people. The youth worker may be low on the totem pole and have limited access to senior staff.	WALK THE TALK... An organization with youths as its primary constituency will elevate the prominence and importance of those staff members who work directly with young people on programming, planning, evaluation, or advocacy campaigns. It will demonstrate respect for youths and emphasize the value of intergenerational teamwork.

How necessary is it to prepare and train the staff?

Adults need help learning how to collaborate with young people just as much as youths need help adjusting to their transformed role. Even though we all were young once, it is easy to forget. What a difference a few decades make in widening the proverbial generation gap! Adultism workshops by such groups as Youth On Board (www.youthonboard.org) are designed to confront negative stereotypes and unspoken fears about teens.

Trainings need to permeate the institution from the boardroom on down. One down-to-earth example that underscores this point is the main public library in downtown Chicago where everyone from security guards to the librarians behind the reference desk participate in such workshops. Look to younger people already involved with your organization to help design and facilitate these types of sensitivity trainings. Exercises might include humorous role-reversal skits where young people share their own stereotypes and fears about teaming up with "boring" adults and control freaks. Another entertaining approach is when youths pretend to be adults and demonstrate ways adults may be unaware of patronizing or bossy behavior. For example, an adult may frequently interrupt or speak up when there is silence. Another favorite: the "kids" are told to sit on the floor while adults sit or stand—looking down at them. Adults also should engage in role-reversal improvisations and open the lines of communication about specific youth behaviors that drive them crazy. The purpose is not to deny but acknowledge differences and be amused by them whenever possible.

An understanding of adolescent development can help determine how best to share certain responsibilities, particularly with younger teens. Keep in mind these developmental benchmarks are generalizations; don't err on the side of underestimating youths' capabilities. In the majority of successful advocacy campaigns, young people surprise themselves as well as adults and policy-makers by exceeding expectations. It is vital for adults to demonstrate genuine confidence and trust in young people's abilities, including those untested.

Broader diversity training for staff, board members, youth staff and/or volunteers can be another worthwhile investment—especially if sessions go beyond the issue of age to include socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, regional background, family history, personality type, etc. Ongoing staff development is necessary to challenge the thinking of employees at all levels of the organization who resist the premise that adults can take turns with young people at learning and leading, and also gain knowledge from them.

MONEY SAVING TIP: Send one or two staff people to shadow their counterparts at another organization that have been collaborating effectively with young people. These site visits can prove to be more cost-effective than attending conferences. Another potential gain: mentoring relationships may emerge from this shadowing experience.

What advocacy activities are restricted due to an organization's IRS status?

Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. tax code carries the limitation that only a certain percentage of the budget of exempt nonprofit organizations can be used for lobbying activities. Some organizations decide not to spend a dime for fear of jeopardizing their tax-exempt status, while other nonprofits are adept at conforming to both the spirit and letter of the law. Two general rules of thumb that usually are permissible include:

- providing training on how the legislative process works and opportunities for citizen involvement, as well as the status of legislative proposals but not information on specific bills; and
- meeting with elected officials and their staff as representatives of the organization or coalition to express views about an issue as long as support or opposition for specific bills is not discussed. A term the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT enjoys is "legucate," in other words, educating lawmakers about legislation.

With targeted attacks by individual Members of Congress on organizations that receive federal grants, it's prudent to have up-to-date information on legislative intent, recent regulations, and court decisions. A few recommended resources include:

- *Being A Player: A Guide to the IRS Lobbying Regulations for Advocacy Charities and E-Advocacy for Nonprofits: The Law of Lobbying and Election-Related Activity on the Net*, from the Alliance for Justice. Its Foundation Advocacy Initiative can answer questions about supporting nonprofit public policy work. Contact Alliance for Justice, 11 Dupont Circle, Washington DC 20036 Toll-free: 866-NP-LOBBY or fai@afj.org
- *Nonprofit Lobbying Guide, Playing by the Rules: Handbook on Voter Participation and Education Work for 501(c)(3) Organizations*, Independent Sector, 1200 18th Street NW, Washington DC 20036 Toll-free: 888-860-8118 or www.independentsector.org

Of course, 501(c)(4) advocacy organizations have more leeway in lobbying and political campaign activities because contributions to this type of group are not tax-deductible.

What are various staffing arrangements to consider?

A general rule of thumb is to have a full-time program manager plus another staff person whom devotes at least 50% of his/her time to youth involvement. With at least two people—perhaps an adult and a young person—there is less isolation and greater synergy. Furthermore, individual personalities naturally gravitate to certain people and two people expand the breadth of outreach and rapport. Working in pairs, they can share frustrations rather than dumping internal office politics and other problems on those volunteering their time for the cause. They can process situations together and re-energize. Also, if one staffer moves on, some continuity can be maintained.

In addition to cross-functional staffing, consider identifying individual staff who might want to be matched with youths to engage in mutual mentoring. This buddy system has the potential benefits of investing more employees in the “youth piece” and expanding young activists' organizational contacts and experiences.

Another approach to increase staff capacity is to provide grants to existing community-based organizations for help mobilizing different populations. These partnerships, especially where many of the youth workers are indigenous to the community, can achieve what outsiders cannot. In one situation, a student currently attending law school was paid as a part-time coach to help teens from the same public housing community where he grew up.

AmeriCorps and other interns also can complement the team but the length of involvement may not last beyond several months. To increase continuity and provide opportunities for advancement, an increasingly popular model is to hire a dozen or so teens as youth organizers, who work closely with two site coordinators. Pay that exceeds the minimum wage makes these very competitive positions that can command high levels of accountability. Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth in San Francisco have years of experience with this type of intergenerational staffing. Many more foundations are embracing the philosophy of providing compensation, especially to urban youths of color with few employment opportunities.

What character traits and skills are essential when co-piloting with youths?

“As a young person, I am very excited about the world, my future and the endless possibilities both offer. I want to make a positive difference. The adults I am drawn to are those who have not completely forgotten their adolescence and its open-mindedness. They believe in me and my abilities and encourage me to attain my goals...Some adults surprise and inspire me.”

~ Katherine Zondlo

“We discovered that every one of our geezers who continues to play a leadership role has one quality of overriding importance: neoteny. The dictionary defines neoteny, a zoological term, as “the retention of youthful qualities by adults.” Neoteny is more than retaining a youthful appearance, although that is often part of it. Neoteny is the retention of all those wonderful qualities that we associate with youth: curiosity, playfulness, eagerness, fearlessness, warmth, energy. . . Neoteny is a metaphor for the quality—the gift—that keeps the fortunate of whatever age focused on all the marvelous undiscovered things to come.”

~ Warren G. Bennis and Robert J. Thomas, *Geeks & Geezers: How Era, Values and Defining Moments Shape Leaders*

The most talented collaborators are imaginative and savvy managers who relate easily with young people and aren't afraid to shake the bushes. Experience in community organizing is a major bonus. A natural affinity with this age group is obligatory. Unlike acquiring advocacy skills, establishing rapport is best when it is not a learned behavior.

Evening calls, late afternoon meetings, weekend work, chauffeur responsibilities, and general schmoozing are some inevitable duties of being an able adult partner. A telephone conversation with a young activist may mean spending 75% of the time talking about social issues (personal news) and the remaining 25% about the issue at hand, namely social action (community change).

In numerous studies, the most highly rated characteristics of effective initiatives all involved characteristics of adults who:

- 1) relate well to youths;
- 2) care about young people;
- 3) are honest and comfortable in talking about issues;
- 4) are sufficiently trained to implement the program;
- 5) support and understand the program's goals; and
- 6) have a good overall understanding of adolescent development.

The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine study entitled *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* emphasizes that adults wear many hats as “role models, pathfinders, arbitrators, peacemakers, interpreters, mentors, promoters of civic ethics, and administrators.”

Another important dimension is to seek out adult advisors and youth coordinators who reflect the diversity of the community. Equally important, young people need to see adults exchanging ideas, collaborating and having fun with people from different backgrounds.

Here are some other qualities in successful intergenerational programs that the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT has seen firsthand and discussed at length with young people as well as adults.

Respect & Encouragement

Early in life, one is more likely to want to remake the world. As you get older, the tendency is to resist change. The new paradigm consists of mutual education where we all can learn from one another. It can be refreshing for an adult to admit not knowing everything and most likely you'll be respected for it. This holds true particularly for those youths who have rarely experienced a co-equal relationship with their parents, teachers, or authority figures.

Rather than impose your ideas, heed the advice of one teen activist:

“If someone comes up with an idea, build on it.
Keep encouraging us. That gives us confidence we need.”

Beware, though, of providing only passive feedback. One student who has served on many task forces and community commissions labels this the adult smirk—“a half smile and slight nod as a young person speaks and silently thinks that the ideas being presented are unrealistic, have been tried in the past, or are plain stupid.” Real encouragement will emerge when there is honest and thoughtful discussion, active listening, and everyone—regardless of age—is treated as equal.

Adventurous & Humorous

Another key character trait is an energetic willingness to navigate uncharted waters. Part of the fun for young people is not to know what will happen. Instead of being a doubter, adults need to take a leap of faith and as one young activist put it:

“Lead us to the cliff and trust us.”

Individuals with a background in community service may need considerable training to gain both the spirit and skills to engage in the more controversial realm of advocacy. A gregarious attitude helps when challenging the status quo and interacting with politicians.

Humor is another important quality. Adults can let down their guard and have fun. As adults loosen up though, they shouldn't expect youths to want to bear their souls. There are no shortcuts in the time it takes to build rapport and trust.

Connections & Continuity

Identifying timely opportunities complements the prioritizing process. While it sounds counterintuitive, it's actually easier to jump on board a train that is already moving down the tracks than one parked at the station. As young people consider various ideas, adult allies often can suggest possible tie-ins with upcoming conferences, legislative hearings, news conferences, and other events. Adults often play an important role of identifying a larger circle, specifically policy-makers, media outlets, and community organizations that might be good to contact. To piggyback an initiative to an ongoing campaign usually boosts a campaign's momentum.

Immediate and incremental steps toward achieving a long-term goal require the ability to prioritize. As a behind-the-scenes choreographer rather than a director, an adult ally can help rank what activities might be done and when. Consider several initial activities to build support or awareness, for instance, collecting hundreds of signatures on a petition drive or getting an article published in one of the local newspapers. Early concrete accomplishments establish a track record and stimulate the snowball effect where one event leads to others. A modest amount of news coverage about a campaign is likely to result in speaking invitations and endorsements, possibly attracting donations by various organizations and community groups.

Passion & Patient Persistence

There are degrees of commitment but this is not a good job for someone without passion for the cause. Passion not only fuels the hard work, but is also contagious.

Patience is another important quality. A teenager's competing interests, crowded calendar, and limited control of his/her schedule represent very real challenges. An adult team member may make a half a dozen phone calls to try to get a high school student to come to a meeting and still the individual may not show. "Don't ever give up on them; just keep coming back," urges one veteran youth coordinator. For example, the student leader of one group had to drop out because of a health condition, but five months later her commitment was stronger than ever. Throughout her hospitalization and recovery, the advisor continued to send her notes, news clips, and other information about the campaign.

It can be helpful to remind everyone that change rarely occurs without resistance. Share the familiar process:

First Stage = Ignorance & Apathy

Second Stage = Ridicule & Opposition

Third Stage = Resignation & Acceptance

This final stage is when the solution—often a compromise—has been adopted. Typically by this juncture the attitude about the remedy or reform is that "it was bound to happen." The civil rights movement, the Vietnam War protests, anti-apartheid boycotts, and other non-violent acts of civil disobedience serve as powerful reminders of the patience and persistence required to gain widespread public support and systemic social change.

What titles (youth coordinator, advisor, etc.) are more appropriate?

“Our answer is the world's hope; it is to rely on youth. The cruelties and obstacles of this swiftly changing planet will not yield to obsolete dogmas and outworn slogans. It cannot be moved by those who cling to a present which is already dying, who prefer the illusion of security to the excitement of danger. It demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease.”

~ Senator Robert F. Kennedy

Relationships are most important but titles do set the tone and may convey an adult supervisory role. Consider the following definitions:

- *advisor* - a person who offers official or professional advice;
- *ally* - one in helpful association with another;
- *coach* - a person who trains, directs, or instructs;
- *coordinator* - one of equal importance, rank, or degree;
- *mentor* - a wise and trusted counselor or teacher;
- *partner* - one who is united or associated with another in an activity; or
- *sponsor* - one who assumes responsibility for another person or group.

While behavior is the real litmus test, terms like “adult leader” or “youth director” may undermine attempts to achieve a more co-equal status. Some argue persuasively that titles and also addressing adults as “Mr.” or “Ms.” are absolutely necessary in setting boundaries. Of course, there is no substitute for an extensive discussion about youth and adult roles and certain responsibilities may be set by the host organization or funders. (See Chapter IV, Advocacy Skill-Building Activities, for exercises to facilitate such discussions.)

How important is it to hire young adults?

To reduce the generation gap, the prevailing wisdom is to hire someone under age 30. Thankfully, the pool of talented youth practitioners continues to grow and will continue with more undergraduate programs in youth work. Also, high school graduates who are experienced advocates can be ideal. A perfect match happened in North Carolina when a college student with six years of involvement in tobacco control was brought on board as the youth empowerment evaluator for the “Question Why” initiative. Similarly, a twentysomething who attended her first youth tobacco summit back when she smoked in 10th grade now was hired to launch California’s college-age tobacco control program.

Having said this though, the background, interests, and personalities of a diverse group of youths demand unique individuals. One’s life experience, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic level have tremendous bearing on interpersonal skills. In fact, a middle-aged,

long-term resident living in the community will have better cultural connections than a newcomer as this anecdote reveals. Students at a troubled high school in Oakland, California persuaded their principal to hire a 65-year-old grandmother from the neighborhood as one of the security guards. Community organizing depends on community folks. It increases the odds of success if a grassroots campaign is culturally sensitive. So definitely devote time to scouting for young people but don't let age be the main hiring criteria.

Hiring trends in "edutainment" advocacy is built on an underlying premise of social marketing to include members of the target audience in program planning and message delivery. This approach tends to attract a different crowd from those in more traditional advocacy efforts. This venue often concentrates on disseminating information through the burgeoning number of online outlets, concerts, alternative media outlets, etc. High school students are hired to design gear and produce magazines—usually distributed as free giveaways—that blend the primary message with a myriad of other topics of interest to the target audience. In the case of "Truth," the American Legacy Foundation's brand name to counter the tobacco industry, the under-30 crowd is at the helm running www.thetruth.com and designing vehicles from sandals to Frisbees, to advertise what they unabashedly call their "propaganda." Teenage marketers can be key advisors to the PR pros in the creation of tag lines, billboards, TV spots, and other expensive advertising.

The flashy aspects of "edutainment" have the potential of causing conflict, especially among some older staff who feel overshadowed and sidelined, or see their budgets shrinking. The challenge is for the social marketing sizzle to complement rather than compete with local grassroots organizing efforts. It can help to revisit the goals of a multi-faceted advocacy campaign with the reminder that "everyone is needed."

What role can young people play in staff selection?

Organizations that have grown accustomed to young people being involved in many capacities usually do not make hiring decisions for certain positions without their input. A new intergenerational initiative however, typically begins with an adult already on staff who may have little or no prior contact with young people. In this situation, take a couple of weeks to find a few interested youths willing to participate at this early stage, especially if more people are going to be hired.

The following anecdote demonstrates the benefits of such a process. Candidates vying for positions from substance abuse counselor to nurse at a clinic in North Carolina were interviewed by the Teen Advisory Council of Wilmington Health Access for Teens. The executive director expected the teens would be attracted to applicants who were most like them. However, to her surprise "They didn't care about age, sex, color, or nationality, but only what they sensed about the person's ability to relate to them as people, to care about them." Most of the applicants had never been interviewed by teens and it made them very nervous, but the youth selection committee easily forgave that and proved their professionalism when they carefully read résumés and weeded out candidates they liked but who didn't have the

necessary experience. Since the clinic's opening, visits exceeded projections credited in part to the fact that the youths involved actually vouched for the staff throughout the community because they played a major role in hiring everyone from the receptionist to the and doctors. (A public service spot created by these youth decisionmakers in included in the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT "Influential Young Advocates" video.)

It is becoming second nature—not an afterthought—to solicit the opinions of those youths with a significant track record with an organization on personnel matters. Besides being involved in hiring staff, responsibility extends to evaluating the job performance of both adults who collaborate with youths and their own peers who may have part-time paid positions. For instance, some thirty teenagers with the Regional Youth/Adult Substance Abuse Project in Bridgeport, Connecticut, rather than the RYASAP executive director, determine whether to renew the contract for their part-time youth coordinator.

To what extent can youths be involved in fundraising?

If young people are involved at the ground floor in designing an initiative, they are in an ideal position to help attract contributions, grants, and in-kind donations. When youths serve on a board of directors, a frequent observation is the degree to which these members dream up innovative fundraising strategies that complement more traditional approaches suggested by older trustees. Adults who have become convinced of the special influence of young activists can be among the most credible voices to maintain or increase the funding to support intergenerational collaboration.

Moreover, young activists with a history of involvement in an organization can be among the most persuasive representatives in face-to-face meetings with potential donors and grant-makers. Young activists can get on the speaking circuit, asking civic and faith-based organizations for endorsements, as well as dollars. Youth-produced photography, artwork, and poetry can be turned into moneymaking products.

It is increasingly common for government agencies and foundations to require young people to take significant roles in writing the applications as well as overseeing the implementation of the grants. Youths and adults should receive training on grant writing and developing a budget so responsibilities can be shared to the fullest extent possible.

The ongoing challenge of generating financial support is one major reason why the overall budget and the current balance sheet should be shared continuously with the youths involved with a campaign. Without this information, they may think the organization has unlimited resources or the reverse, there's no money to do anything. The secret is ownership; if young people are actively immersed in the cause and treated as equal partners, that passionate engagement can be unleashed in the never ending fundraising campaign.

What outcomes should be evaluated?

Deciding what outcomes to measure and appropriate evaluation instruments to use are daunting tasks. Rather than pretend to have expertise in this area, these comments reflect the overarching philosophy of intergenerational advocacy. What follow are some considerations about assessing outcomes in two distinct spheres.

Impact on Youth Development

Many initiatives see individual emotional and intellectual growth as the primary goal rather than macro-level environmental change. If this is the case, measuring competencies and other developmental indicators in adolescents is the priority. However, many evaluators contend that self-efficacy is not necessarily an automatic or transferable skill; an individual may feel empowered in one situation but powerless at another time. Other assessments that seek to track academic attainment, healthy lifestyles, etc. rarely produce solid research-based findings. As discussed in Chapter I, the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT thinks that an emphasis on preparing adolescents for adulthood diminishes the important contribution young people make, particularly in the public policy arena. Still many boards and funders insist on data showing the impact on youth development. Simple pre- and post-evaluations can capture attitudinal change and confidence about specific advocacy skills. Luckily more grantors expect a line item to cover the cost of a comprehensive evaluation.

In any assessment of youth development, it is wise to analyze the organizational supports dedicated to intergenerational teamwork. Different infrastructures, funding levels, and staffing arrangements all have a tremendous bearing on the extent of advocacy skills and leadership opportunities young people experience. Examining the organization culture and resources is discussed in greater depth in Chapter V: "How do we evaluate our intergenerational advocacy efforts?"

Impact on Community

Certain advocacy campaigns have straight forward goals with the knowledge that incremental progress is not assured even over a decade. After all, the legislator who chairs a committee can be a one man wrecking crew and ensure a bill never moves forward. Some interim outcomes that can change the political climate, such as coalition building and media advocacy, can be measured. Even when a public policy is achieved, usually no immediate community impact is evident.

Since it is nearly impossible to quantify lasting environmental change in the short-term, it can be useful to evaluate developments in terms of core components of a multi-faceted campaign: educating the public, mobilizing a diverse constituency, and winning the support of

the powers-that-be. For example, some outcomes for broadening the constituency might include:

- number of youth-serving organizations approached;
- number of public, private, and alternative schools reached;
- number of community organizations involved;
- number of endorsements by civic organizations and religious groups;
- number of active members of the campaign or coalition, etc.

In gauging the level of public awareness about an issue, online polling and door-to-door canvassing can reveal shifting attitudes. The amount of media coverage over the course of several months can be another indicator:

- number of minutes/hours of television and radio coverage about the campaign;
- number of articles including published letters to the editor in daily and community newspapers, etc.

Gaining the support of influential individuals and key decision-makers can be tracked by some crude tallies:

- number of newspaper editorials;
- number of endorsements from community leaders and politicians;
- number of emails sent to legislators;
- number of letters mailed or faxed to legislators;
- number of face-to-face contacts with legislators and/or their staff;
- number of co-sponsors on particular bills, etc.

Evaluation can often be cordoned off to professionals but, once again, determining what should be evaluated and designing a variety of tools to collect this information should involve young activists as well as other campaign strategists. Youth In Focus (www.youthinfocus.net) is one of the growing number of organizations that have a track record in this field of youth-led evaluation.

Chapter III

YOUTH RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

“There are three ways of trying to win the young. There is persuasion, there is compulsion, and there is attraction. You can preach at them, that is a hook without a worm; you can say “you must volunteer,” and that is of the devil; and you can tell them, “you are needed,” that appeal hardly ever fails.”

~ K. Hahn, *Readings from the Hurricane
Island Outward Bound School*

“Come all you young people. Don't be content with things as they are. You will make all kinds of mistakes but as long as you are generous and true and also fierce, you cannot hurt the world or even seriously distress her. She was meant to be wooed and won by youth.”

~ Winston Churchill

You've paved the way for intergenerational advocacy among your organization's bigwigs and now the challenge is to build a team that includes young people. If the organization has not worked directly with this age group, there is bound to be uncertainty about where to start, how to recruit, and who to hire. You might entertain doubts about whether young people would even be interested.

Indeed, attracting collaborators in an advocacy campaign or community action project might be the most difficult step. But when it is properly conveyed to young people that their voice and opinions matter, an organization can see instant positive results, and may even find long-term, enthusiastic team members who bring new spirit, drive, and commitment to a cause. This chapter includes strategies of recruitment, suggested resources for outreach in the larger community, and methods to retain young advocates, as well discussions about the pros and cons of involving different age groups, diversity issues including gender considerations, and engaging non-traditional leaders.

What are some initial recruiting strategies?

The toughest phase can be the very beginning. The first challenge is to attract a small core group of youths that can be the engine to recruit others. Think of yourself as a headhunter. You might say, "We need your ideas. Can we pick your brain? Would you and a couple of your friends be willing to help us get started?" Don't ask for a long-term commitment but for guidance during the initial planning stage, especially in finding other young people to help develop a multi-faceted advocacy campaign. Describe potential opportunities and skills they would gain. Appeal to their ability to address a long-standing problem, help devise a solution, and make their mark. Demonstrate that this is not a matter of window dressing but real, meaningful involvement. At the same time, be forthright if the role of youths is limited by criteria set forth by the host organization, coalition, or funders.

A distinct blend of qualities must exist simultaneously to motivate young people to get involved and stay committed to the cause.

PERSONAL GROWTH . . .	PUBLIC CONTRIBUTION . . .
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Life & Teamwork – gain a sense of belonging and be with people who share similar concerns; widen one's circle by meeting youths from other schools, neighborhoods, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Unite with Others – collaborate with people of different backgrounds to craft and advocate for solutions to specific school or community-wide problems
<input type="checkbox"/> Sheer Fun - do amusing projects with other youths and adults who are interested in same issues; participate in the adult world with grownup responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Help Others – serve, safeguard, and seek ways to improve the lives of one's own generation and others, especially those who are younger
<input type="checkbox"/> Adventure & Exploration – participate in exciting and challenging opportunities (planning a rally, leading a workshop, being a guest on TV, testifying, doing undercover investigations, traveling to other cities, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Raise Public Awareness – take risks in efforts to gain public attention on issues of deep concern that continue to be ignored or that are deemed impossible to remedy; put one's passion into action
<input type="checkbox"/> Creativity & Expression – have artistic opportunities (developing skits, raps; video production, designing posters, pamphlets, zines, websites, billboards, ad campaigns, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Impact Community Problems - prove through one's own actions the contributions of young pragmatic idealists and dispel negative stereotypes about youth people
<input type="checkbox"/> Acquire Skills – gain confidence in public speaking, writing, grassroots organizing, running meetings, and other experiences which help job seekers and college-bound youths build their résumés and also counts towards community service graduation requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> Model Civic Engagement – demonstrate that citizenship is more than voter participation and even before one is old enough to vote, and includes advocating before an authentic audience (school board, city council, legislature, etc.) rather than in a mock debate or other simulation
<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise Leadership – have opportunities to influence peers, parents, policy-makers, press, and others in many different arenas of society; gain recognition for one's efforts	<input type="checkbox"/> Make History – challenge the status quo and advocate for community change with the possibility of making a lasting impact; participate in a larger movement

If you and other adults have limited contact with young people, cultivate relationships with youth workers at community-based organizations including social service agencies, youth ministers, and others (refer to checklists in this Chapter and the Appendix) who can suggest a few youths who might be interested. Just as anthropologists seek out a community guide, it is important to find scouts who can navigate a variety of social networks in both school settings and the community at large.

One strategy that can be problematic is to rely on one's colleagues and friends to recruit their own sons and daughters. While the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT has seen the advantages of this such as greater reliability, fewer scheduling conflicts, and sustained involvement because of parental support, some of these youths may get roped in but not necessarily want to be involved. Furthermore, this parent-child situation may stifle frank discussion on such sensitive issues as teen sexuality.

Consider creating a committee charged with this responsibility that would have at least half a dozen youths. Like all meetings with young people, they should be fast-paced and action oriented. One approach might be to reach consensus on the overall recruiting goal and then break into subcommittees to consider factors such as the age range and specific skills (writer, spokesperson, illustrator, webmaster, etc.). There is no perfect recruiting template and a certain amount of trial and error will reveal what works best.

Here are a few unique guidelines and procedures used by a variety of community-based organizations:

- **Academic Standing** - To make sure advocacy work does not jeopardize a student's academic growth, a minimum grade point average is required. Tutoring and college prep training also are provided by the host organization.
- **Constituency Representation** - A brochure read that young people with police records or a history of prior drug use were eligible to be involved. The result: recruiting improved dramatically.
- **Geographic Representation** - A targeted drive led to the recruitment of a student who lived on the same street as the Speaker of the State Legislature.
- **Selection Process** - Four high school students, who were involved from the very beginning, reached consensus with the host organization on criteria and then interviewed and selected a remarkably diverse group of 25 students who together planned and ran a statewide youth conference.
- **Stipends and Other Incentives** - The offer of financial compensation attracts youths who have after-school jobs. (Pay and also community service credit are discussed in separate questions.)

Part of the strategy might summarize the potential benefits of being involved in an advocacy campaign. Another task for this committee is to spell out what is expected. Responsibilities might be as straightforward as:

- attend meetings regularly;
- actively participate in strategic planning;
- respond to e-mails and other requests promptly;
- follow through on commitments;
- help coordinate a specific campaign activity; and
- represent the campaign or organization in the community.

If an official code of conduct is created, consequences should be spelled out. This information will need to be reemphasized at overnight retreats along with the responsibilities of chaperones.

Another task for the committee is to develop recruitment materials such as flyers and posters. Consider recruiting a few bilingual youths to translate leaflets in other languages. Think about a hook that will attract interest, such as publicizing that a conference will be held at a university where high school students would stay in college dorms. Food is another form of bait. For example, a morning announcement over the school P.A. system can be combined with posters inviting interested students to caucus during lunch or better yet, walk through the cafeteria carrying hot pizza while advertising the meeting. With a core group of young recruiters, they need to be given the resources and encouragement to pursue a variety of activities that might attract interest (information booth, battle of the bands concert, talent show, skits, assemblies, teach-in, summit, etc.).

Recruitment needs to be an ongoing process because of natural attrition, not to mention the transient lives of young people. In most advocacy campaigns, it is ideal to have about one third of young activists be veterans, one third with varying degrees of experience and understanding about the issue, and the rest newcomers.

Any group benefits from a mix of leaders and followers from different backgrounds and talents. Teenage Research Unlimited, Inc., a market research firm, segments teens into distinct personality types:

- 5% = Influencers
- 10% = Independents
- 15% = Passives
- 70% = Conformers

The following chart should be taken with a grain of salt because these are simplistic generalizations. Emphasis is placed on tapping the potential of the largest group—the overlooked conformers.

CATEGORY	POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
SUPER STARS	National Honor Society students, officers with student government, and other stars are easy to recruit. Their leadership skills and previous training give them experience in running meetings, executing action plans, public speaking, etc.	These cream-of-the-crop students may be over-committed and see their involvement as a good résumé builder. They may not be comfortable with a non-hierarchical or informal organization structure.
COOL INFLUENTIALS	These popular in-crowd personalities, who may include athletes, may extend representation to different social groups. They are likely to contribute ideas but may look to others to carry out plans.	These influential characters may pull in their friends but may create the misperception that the campaign is run by a clique where outsiders may not be welcome.
OVERLOOKED CONFORMERS	These youths may surprise themselves and others by their level of involvement and commitment. They may be effective worker bees and effective spokespeople in a genuine, unassuming way.	Conformers may be overly polite and hold back their honest opinions. They may be a bit intimidated by their peers until they feel confident about their own abilities.
EDGY INDEPENDENTS	These youths may be passionate and bring an array of creative talents such as theatrical or artistic skills. They are likely to enjoy interacting with others who embrace out-of-the-box thinking.	Independents may not be keen working with certain personalities such as the “influentials.” They may be naysayers and restless with proposals that seem to be modest, incremental solutions.
RAGING REBELS	These youths may be the trendsetters and be the strongest challengers to the status quo. They may be brutally honest in responding to other people’s ideas and unwilling to compromise.	Rebels may act more defiant and be less willing to collaborate for fear that adults might co-opt the agenda or because the decision-making process is too bureaucratic.
DEFEATIST DISENFRANCHISED	Alienated youths who are able to transform their anger into action can have a dramatic impact. Dropouts, adjudicated juveniles, and society’s ‘throwaways’ can be among the most compelling voices as community change agents.	Building trust with peers and adults takes time because these youths have fear of being abandoned—again. A sense of powerlessness and difficult personal situations may be overwhelming.

If recruitment is selective, an application might be used where individuals describe why they are interested. A self-evaluation could be included where the applicant would check off skills and experience, for example, public speaking, ability to work with others, research, writing, artistic talent, computer skills, etc. Another section might ask about what the applicant hopes to gain from this experience that might mirror the checklist. See Appendix for “Sample Campaign Participation Form.”

The recruitment team might send out formal letters to each person confirming their involvement. This group also should oversee the creation of an information packet about the advocacy campaign that might include background on the sponsoring organization, along with a permission consent and photo release form for parents. Even if some of the youths involved are not minors, the more parents and guardians are informed the better. Refer to the Appendix for “Sample Parent/Guardian Consent Form.”

How do we achieve diversity, including marginalized youths?

“While most of society looks down upon youth with disgust and judgment based only upon their outer appearances, we take in all kids, and works as a springboard for any artistic talents or ideas that come through the youth channel. True there are bad seeds, but it’s definitely not safe to say that all kids who “look” like they are into drugs, and “look” like they have run into the law, or “look” even somewhat radical are the bad seeds...The importance of this organization is the consistency of the message and its openness in accepting people – youth from all walks of life.”

~ Lindsey Hameny, Tucson student active with Full Court Press

There is a pressing need to engage non-traditional leaders from poor urban cities who have been excluded. These voices are rarely heard. If the anger felt by many disenfranchised youths is merged with vision, the result can be profound.

Social service agency staff, recreation center directors, and others in neighborhood-based organizations can open doors to the best recruiters who might include ministers, grandparents, and other longtime residents. These community anchors are ideal intermediaries to approach individual youths.

However, this population needs to be approached with acute sensitivity. To begin with, labels such as “at risk youth” should be avoided. This term has racist overtones, often referring to young males of color, and is based on the premise that they are likely to engage in harmful behavior. A philosophy that replaces pathology with potential and promise is the first step to building trust. Adults who demonstrate a willingness to take risks on behalf of youths by supporting them may convince these youths who have been demonized that their ideas and involvement are genuinely valued and valid.

Clear intent and expectations are crucial. Listen, Inc. (www.lisn.org), a leading national organization focused on investing in the emerging generation of indigenous leaders, underscores the importance of organizing young people to formulate their own questions, define their own problems, find their own solutions, and pursue their agenda. This principle applies to everyone but it is even more fundamental in poor communities where outsiders often ask for community input but then ignore it. This is why the overall advocacy mission should be spelled out. Youths need to know why they are important to the cause and the extent to which they can determine the course of action. If an agenda already has been set, that information needs to be shared.

Many disenfranchised young people may be “unaffiliated” and no prior involvement with a formal neighborhood group necessitates more orientation. Team building activities can help begin the process of fostering a sense of connection with others involved as well as the host organization itself. Demonstrating genuine interest in learning from these youths and guarding against being judgmental offer the best chance of building solidarity. Always remember there is no reason for youths with wounds from years of neglect or outright oppression to trust anyone.

So as not to single out those youths with little or no prior experience in formal leadership situations, avoid making any assumptions about what everyone knows and at the same time, don't act patronizing. The most basic information should be spelled out so no one is embarrassed. For instance, an out-of-town trip by air means not only suggesting what needs to be packed but what kind of bag to bring. Role-plays can serve to raise sensitive issues surrounding presentation skills with VIPs that are altogether different from interacting with one's peers. Discussing body language such as making eye contact and smiling can be particularly important for those young males who are accustomed to having to keep their guard up, especially with strangers in unfamiliar territory.

A high noise level and fidgeting are the norm with any cadre of young activists and it can be disruptive, particularly if the process of group discussion and consensus may be a new experience. A set of ground rules that are discussed, agreed to, and enforced by the entire group helps maintain a productive and respectful atmosphere (see Chapter IV for more on ground rules.) Still, it is recommended that very specific information be conveyed, as one veteran youth worker recalls when she told everyone: "Please take only what you can eat" but didn't say "for this meal," and many interpreted this as an invitation to stash vast quantities of food to take home.

Another piece of advice is to provide information about activities to family members, even if it seems like a lost cause. Illiteracy can be an unspoken reason but in any case, all letters and other material (for everyone's benefit) should be understandable and, if need be, translated into native languages.

Beyond advocacy training, there may be a range of other skills offered including anger management and facilitation techniques. Some organizations place a heavy emphasis on both the current academic challenges as well as higher education, and provide tutoring, GED, and SAT classes. In any coalition, everyone's background and experience are entirely unique. The need to be sensitive to these differences is that much more important when collaborating with youths who feel alienated and are disenfranchised. It may be better to hold off on trying to engage this segment of the population, particularly if limited resources and lack of sustained funding are imminent. A short-lived foray pursuing community change can do more damage than good.

Are middle school students too young and high school seniors too old?

“Though relatively few young adolescents are fully abstract thinkers, they are frequently at a heightened level of intellectual activity. Thus the capacity to think systematically and hypothetically, to handle multiple variables, to reflect critically upon their own thought and that of others, to see shades of gray, are but a few of the mental abilities which begin to emerge at this time.”

~ John Arnold, NC State University
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Absolutely not in terms of tweens. In fact, remarkable advocacy campaigns have been initiated by pre-teens (see Appendix, “Success Stories”). Seventh and eighth graders are ready to right wrongs. Unlike older teens, they tend to be more open to suggestions offered by adults. However, because of their small size and high-pitched voices, they have to work harder to be taken seriously. This is one reason why it is so crucial for these young activists to collect their own data and analyze it. Ownership of information boosts their confidence and understanding of the issue. When politicians and reporters make flattering yet patronizing comments, these youths will have credible facts with which to prove they know what they are talking about. (Research strategies are described in Chapter IV.)

Unlike older students, this age group has the potential to be involved in a multi-faceted advocacy campaign for half a dozen years or more, even longer than many of their adult counterparts. This experience may position them to take significant lead roles even among older peers and adults.

Middle school youths rely on grownups not only for transportation but to gain exposure to a wider spectrum of views as they question why things are the way they are. The YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT has found that some adults genuinely enjoy collaborating with this age group while others definitely don't! What's most important is to acknowledge this preference and make sure there is a compatible intergenerational match.

In terms of whether it makes sense to recruit high school seniors, the answer is yes, especially if the campaign has clear goals and activities that can be accomplished in a 3-6 month time frame. It's wise for seniors to begin passing the torch to sophomores and juniors around January because celebrating their final months in high school and planning life after graduation may consume the lion's share of their attention.

Another advantage for involving high school seniors is to tap them for part-time jobs and other positions with more responsibilities. Avoid the temptation of getting those with cars to drive other youths. The risk is far too high. For those students who go to a nearby college or university, it is quite possible they may be interested in staying involved in various capacities (i.e., helping to plan or speak at a conference, training others, facilitating meetings). Such a ladder for advancement means volunteers might be eligible for an internship, to consult on an ad hoc basis, work 20 hours a week or more, or perhaps serve on the Board of Directors.

How common is gender imbalance?

“According to a poll of some 3,000 junior and high school students, 17% are identified as “activists.” These Millennial Influentials have served as an officer for an organization or club, signed a petition, campaigned for a candidate, written a letter or e-mail to a newspaper or magazine, attended a political rally, speech, or organized a protest; campaigned to change a rule or policy at school, etc. These activists are slightly more likely to be girls than boys (55% female/45% male), have a higher grade average than non-activists, and describe themselves as technologically smart. They’re more likely to volunteer to help for a good cause, as compared to their non-activist peers, and say they usually are the first ones to try new things.”

~ 1999 Roper National Youth Opinion Survey

In contrast to this Roper survey, which reports only a small margin between the percentage of girls and boys who view themselves as “activists,” the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT finds a majority of intergenerational advocacy campaigns experience a lopsided 70-30 female to male ratio. Neil Howe and William Strauss write in *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, “Millennial girls are the generational pathbreakers...What’s fresh about today’s girl life involves traits that are recognizably Millennial: teamwork, action, civic deed-doing, and robust achievement.” Certainly sociologists could contribute a host of explanations but perhaps this phenomenon mirrors the number of women youth workers that far exceeds their male counterparts. This imbalance also is evident in the teaching profession as well as community-based organizations, especially those focused on public health.

With ongoing recruitment and broad-based organizing, it’s quite possible that gender imbalance can be somewhat minimized. One strategy is for the group to discuss the lack of males as a diversity issue; in particular how the general public might perceive a lack of representation of their peers throughout the community. If gender imbalance is determined to be a real concern, some targeted recruitment can concentrate on trying to interest boys and young men in the cause. An outreach technique to encourage everyone to bring a friend along to the next meeting may work, however, the unintended consequence can mean the presence of boyfriends, further complicating the social dynamics. In a random way, the constant search for individuals with particular skills can change the ratio.

Shifts occur from year to year anyway due to natural attrition. The more difficult challenge is avoiding a cliquey group that is not open or welcoming to others.

What about mixing age groups or youths from different backgrounds?

Just as youths can be different from adults in dramatic ways, the same holds true that young people are different from one another. And even though surveys show that this generation is accustomed to diversity, there tends to be polarization between different populations. Demographics of one community may contrast dramatically from the neighboring county. Vast distinctions exist based on geographic and economic differences. Hence, one shouldn't expect programs to necessarily translate from one location to the next, even if two localities are in the same state. An outstanding initiative in the California Bay area may not work in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York; a campaign in New Orleans would need to be organized much differently than in Louisiana's Bible Belt.

One of the struggles with mixing middle school students with older teenagers is maturity levels. In a conference setting, sometimes separate tracks for middle school students and older teenagers allow each age group more of an opportunity to coalesce. This approach also reduces the likelihood that older youths may inadvertently inhibit or intimidate younger students from voicing their ideas. Having said that, there are plenty of examples where the right personalities succeed in engaging everyone and the result is a stronger, more diverse coalition.

Similar challenges may occur when bringing together urban and suburban youths. Class issues can be more of a divisive factor than ethnicity. The same holds true with rural youths who may feel less confident with their peers from big cities. Meetings and retreats with icebreakers and breakouts, along with fun social activities, provide opportunities to mix.

According to *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, five elements are critical to cultivating positive inter-group relationships through inclusiveness:

- Interactions between different groups must be on a level of equal status;
- Activities must be cooperative rather than competitive, involving pursuit of a shared goal;
- Individualized contacts between members of the group need to occur;
- Institutions and authority figures must support the goal of inter-group understanding; "institutional silence," an atmosphere in which race is never mentioned, can lead to unspoken perceptions of discrimination and inter-group tensions; and
- Adults have important roles as "role models, pathfinders, arbitrators, peacemakers, interpreters, mentors, promoters of civic ethics, and administrators."

A bigger problem may occur when newcomers enter into a core group that has already bonded, causing them to feel like outsiders. One approach is to tap each individual's interests and talents with a couple of old timers on specific activities, for instance, writing ad copy or recruiting others. If such collaboration doesn't work out, try different matches. Group dynamics hinge on the individual personalities involved. A unifying group leader or talented facilitator can help different factions talk through their disagreements. Now that many students today have had years of conflict resolution training, they may apply these mediation skills to find common ground. Smoothing over the rough spots usually only stifles tensions that will inevitably resurface.

Is it wise to emphasize earning community service or class credit?

Yes and no. Certainly some students might think about getting involved if their time spent on advocacy activities would help fulfill a service-learning graduation requirement. In plenty of instances, youths with little interest in the cause get hooked because community activism tends to contrast dramatically from traditional volunteer opportunities, especially school-based activities that are adult-directed and apolitical. On the other hand, some participants with little motive beyond service hours or enhancing their college application may never really become engaged. It cannot hurt to publicize this benefit of earning credit but be prepared for the down side.

School credit is another option that can be explored by submitting a formal request to a teacher to substitute certain assignments for volunteer work in the community. A formal internship position is also a possibility that needs approval by a guidance counselor or other school administrator.

In terms of record keeping, some youth coordinators keep a log of each student's attendance at strategy sessions, trainings, etc. The YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT prefers to entrust this responsibility to the student, especially when young people hopefully are active not just at meetings but making calls from home, practicing a presentation, etc. A simple community service log on organization letterhead can be created with several columns that note the date, activity, and number of hours. Brief comments about activities help students remember different experiences and make it easier for them to write a paragraph or essay reflecting on their service, which most schools require. Usually educational institutions also require a signature by an "adult supervisor" to certify that the number of hours is correct. It is a good idea to get students to check on the guidelines for reporting their hours at the beginning of their participation, in case a more official system for keeping records is necessary. Students may need help reconstructing a chronology when writing reports summarizing their activities.

What are the trends regarding stipends and paid youth staff?

Before addressing the matter of compensation, first a point about out-of-pocket expenses. Reimbursement after receipts are submitted is the norm, but young people may need to be given money in advance for transportation to meetings, to purchase a disposable camera for a community mapping survey, or to buy something to eat while waiting to testify. Make sure to emphasize the need to turn in original receipts and change for record keeping purposes. Teen parents may need help paying for childcare. "Big ticket" items such as airfare or conference registration need to be paid for in advance by the host organization. Credit cards are not a given, so extra cash for out of town travel is advisable. For example, one high school student traveled out of state to give a keynote speech and on her return home, she was stranded at the airport overnight with less than \$20 cash.

An increasing number of advocacy groups are paying their core group of youth leaders. These teens are conducting workshops, creating websites, managing volunteers, implementing programs, conducting focus groups, serving as consultants, and performing numerous duties that ordinarily would be the responsibility of adult staff who receive a paycheck.

Many programs offer minimum wage with incremental raises based on experience and responsibilities. Sometimes young people will be paid for each meeting and training they attend, plus reimbursement for transportation. Honorarium or stipends may be more advantageous than a paycheck to avoid the impact on SSI or other income-based benefits that the family may receive. A teenager conducting a workshop may earn \$40 to several hundred dollars for a keynote presentation. Other programs provide a set number of hours per week that is essential for those who have no choice but to work.

Advertising these paid job opportunities usually attracts a large pool of applicants. One likely result of advertising is a more diverse group of youths. Detailed job descriptions with responsibilities set a level of accountability that distinguishes those receiving compensation from volunteers who are actively involved in the advocacy campaign. For example, the web design team needs to attend meetings, meet deadlines, etc. This monetary dimension provides a more level playing field and proves there is a more co-equal partnership between youth and adult staff. Respect is also an outcome of paid youth positions. One 17-year-old admitted, "The pay was a big attraction but the best part was I took the work seriously because I knew the adults were taking me seriously." Parents may be more actively supportive of their son or daughter who is earning money for their community work.

Thorough training and ongoing mentoring are crucial to help these new hires perform well and earn the respect of adult staff as well as their peers. If these paid youths don't seem to be fulfilling their responsibilities, a rift can develop especially by other youths who are devoting lots of time and energy and not receiving any compensation. Paid staff—regardless of age—should be held accountable and evaluated by those for whom they work. A probation period may be wise to consider.

One way to show respect for everyone involved, whether they are paid or not, is to print up a batch of business cards. A simple generic card can include the name and logo of the organization or project, telephone, mailing address, website, and a line where individuals can write their name and that has a title under it, such as "Youth Organizer." While it may seem gimmicky, this type of I.D. recognizes the official role of individual young activists.

How should we approach schools?

Keep in mind there are numerous pathways in any educational institution. Avoid relying exclusively on the top-down approach. Principals are apt to pick "star students" who will be good ambassadors. Some school administrators attempt to discourage or derail students who move beyond apolitical activities into advocacy that may challenge existing policies or attract controversy to the institution.

One point of contact is the community service-learning coordinator. Many school districts require students to complete a minimum of 60 hours of community service learning credits. Parochial schools require nearly double that. At smaller schools, teachers overseeing volunteerism often have good instincts about which students might be particularly interested in a particular cause.

Try to learn which teachers are well regarded by students and inquire about whether someone could speak briefly to a couple of their classes about a community organizing effort.

- Government teachers may leap at the chance for their students to get immersed in the public policy arena.
- Scout for middle school and high school journalism teachers. Media literacy is gaining a foothold in schools where students are taught to develop a critical eye as they analyze news stories, editorials, and especially advertisements. Advocacy campaigns that are seeking to counter the public relations efforts of agricultural giants, the soft drink or alcohol companies, etc. are prime candidates for reading between the lines of the marketing messages.
- School media centers may have a state-of-the-art video production program and offer students the opportunity to create social marketing messages that can be aired in numerous outlets from cable TV stations to advocacy trainings and conferences.

Check with appropriate school administrators or student assistance counselors about students involved with diversion or detention programs. These youths can contribute in many ways and be extremely persuasive witnesses when testifying before policy-makers about the need for more services, funds for enforcement, ineffective policies, etc.

Similarly, don't overlook alternative public schools. This diverse student body may include teenagers from broken homes or who had/have drug problems, teen parents, and juveniles

on probation. Activities that build self-esteem are crucial to these students who've been labeled "losers" for years. Some direct action activities may meet many curricular requirements.

Certainly teachers and school administrators can provide leads to individual students but this strategy should complement peer-to-peer recruiting and broader community outreach efforts. School websites can be a good place to start. Also explore public charter schools as well as religious and secular private schools.

Here's a rundown on school recruiting checkpoints:

- School Newspaper Editor(s)
- School TV Crew
- School Debate Team and Model U.N.
- Student Members of Local School Board and State Board of Education
- Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee
- Student Members of the Local Site-based Improvement Team
- Student Council President and Class Officers
- Student Rep on PTSA; PTSA President or Newsletter Editor
- U.S. Government and Law Teachers
- Journalism, Communications, Media Literacy Teachers
- Environmental Science and Biology Teachers
- Video Production and Photography Department
- Extracurricular Clubs (Young Democrats, Ecology Club; SADD, NOW Chapter, GSA, Free the Children, Key Club, Amnesty International, etc.)
- Community Service-Learning Coordinator
- Peer Counselors, Natural Helpers, and Conflict Resolution Mediators
- Asst. Principal Overseeing School Diversion/Detention
- Health/Family Life Teachers
- School-Based Health Center and/or Nurse
- Resource Teachers Overseeing Independent Study Projects
- Career Center Counselor and/or Guidance Counselors
- Athletic Teams
- Intramural Sports

See Appendix, "School Outreach: Potential Leads" worksheet.

What are some community checkpoints?

Ask around. You are likely to be surprised to discover efforts by a youth group. A call to the clerk of the city council or school board may generate names of students who have presented formal testimony. A search of daily and weekly newspapers may unearth the names of young activists and community-based organizations. While these students may not be interested in your particular advocacy campaign, they probably can recommend others who would be worth contacting. Even in small towns, you won't run out of places and people to scout around for individuals and their friends who might be eager to get involved. Events designed by teens for teens, such as a contest with prizes, community survey, parade, youth speakout, etc. can take word-of-mouth strategy to another level.

Consider the following (see also Appendix, "Community Outreach: Potential Leads" worksheet which is different than the aforementioned "School Outreach"):

- Teen centers, recreation, coffee houses, and other hangouts
- Youth-serving organizations such as Girls Inc., 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs
- Blogs and other online venues
- Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, Youth Commissions, etc.
- Social service agencies
- Health clinics
- Drop-in centers
- Mentoring programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Teen courts
- Correctional facilities
- Churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.
- Shopping malls and strip malls
- Youth philanthropy programs
- Coffee houses, video arcades, skating rinks, etc.
- Movie theaters
- Fairs and festivals
- Concerts
- Sports leagues
- YMCA Youth in Government and other civic education programs
- Museums
- Libraries
- Media (especially newspapers with youth journalists, radio stations, etc.)
- Young entrepreneurs
- Area businesses who hire youths
- Home schooled students

What are the legal implications of youth involvement?

Legal counsel is a must if this is the first time for collaborating with minors. People at youth-serving organizations can lend expertise and common sense on questions surrounding liability, medical release, chaperones, transportation, and organizational policies pertaining to volunteers, especially those under age 18.

On questions of liability, it is prudent to tap the specialists within the organization and have them review all parent consent forms, even photo release forms, to see if a signature protects the staff and organization of unexpected liabilities in connection with their child's participation. (See Appendix, "Sample Parent/Guardian Consent Form and Photo Release" for an example.)

Auto insurance should be checked carefully. If staff or adult volunteers are using their own cars for transportation, individual policies need to be reviewed. The same holds for the organization's coverage for a van or other vehicle that is owned by the nonprofit or government agency. Of course, make sure there is a seat belt for each passenger and that everyone uses one.

Background checks for all adults working closely with minors should be standard practice. Additionally, consider adopting a policy that no adult should ever be alone with an individual youth.

Emancipated youths who have been legally released from the supervision of their parents have unique regulations and state laws that necessitate thorough review.

Another resource to tap is the Nonprofit Risk Management Center (www.nonprofitrisk.org) that offers publications such as *Transportation: Avoiding a Crash Course* and *Staff Screening Toolkit*.

How should parents or guardians be involved?

Keep parents and guardians in the loop to the greatest extent possible. The better informed, the more likely parents will appreciate and support their son's or daughter's activities. Parent consent forms—a necessity if the young person is under 18 years of age—provide an opportunity to share information about the advocacy initiative. Frequent notices with dates and permission slips for individual events also help reduce extra-curricular scheduling conflicts. Of course, all these materials should be written in the family members' native language. Parents also may be willing to volunteer with transportation or to chaperone. Another potential benefit is a parent might be able to open doors through their own network of contacts including elected officials, community leaders, and the news media.

Two ways to avoid common mistakes:

- Check first with the young person to make sure it's okay to call or send a note to his/her parent(s) or guardian.
- Try to have same staff person contact the parent to increase rapport and trust.

Brief handwritten notes to parents about their daughter's or son's contributions to the group may help convince them their child's involvement is worthwhile. Letters of recommendation for potential employees or colleges that highlight a young person's initiative and contribution is another way for parents to get a glimpse of their child's talents that they may not observe at home or in other situations. Praise of this sort also carries weight because it originates from someone besides a family member or friend. This feedback and information also can change the mindset of parents who tend to be supportive of the advocacy campaign but concerned about time diverted away from schoolwork, sports, family obligations, or other priorities.

How do we find chauffeurs and chaperones?

Providing transportation and supervision should be seen as another dimension of recruitment. Even minimal distances in big cities or rural areas can be major barriers to youth infusion. Minors and their parents need to feel safe and comfortable with these arrangements. This explains another benefit for partnering with a community-based youth program, government agency, or church that owns a van. In addition, there is piece of mind so long as there is vehicle insurance that covers the driver and passengers. If parents or other adults independent of an organization are driving, make sure to collect signed parental permission forms that explicitly cover transportation. Avoid a young driver transporting any other youth in their car. If mass transit is an option, don't expect young people to have bus or subway fare. This money should be provided up front and arrangements might need to be made to ensure no one travels alone.

Recruiting chaperones is important for overnight retreats. If possible, seek out mature college students and other young adults along with several parents who might be willing to do this. Try to avoid having the adults who are collaborating as partners simultaneously wear the "den mother" or security guard hat. These roles should be separate. In order to attract these good natured folks, they need to be fed, amused, engaged, and respected like everyone else involved in the effort. Consider recognition awards and other gestures of appreciation.

What strategies reduce youth turnover?

Think about the expression "let kids be kids." Don't force an agenda on them. Provide a safe, comfortable environment where ideas are valued and respected. Keep the door open and make it a standing invitation. Allow sporadic but not chronic absenteeism. It's great to offer a variety of opportunities with well-defined responsibilities and high expectations.

Action-oriented activities that are challenging and fun are the key to retention. Short-term initiatives offer better odds of making concrete headway. A rally and other adrenaline-pumping experiences recharge everyone's batteries. A variety of events engage the talents of different people. Each situation can provide a welcome change to experiment with new roles and responsibilities. For example, a sophomore was terrified of public speaking and opted to work the phones, calling assignment editors and producers about a student-run news conference. Afterward, this 10th grader had gained the confidence to speak on the phone and into the microphone. Time and time again the quietest person proves to be a very effective witness, often more convincing than a peer with oratorical flair who naturally gravitates to the spotlight. Inevitably, one opportunity leads to others.

Similarly, letting different people take turns facilitating meetings and coordinating actions also provides fresh opportunities. Equally important, rotating power minimizes the impact when young activists age out. Continually building capacity improves the effectiveness of the initiative and success breeds success. Here are some additional suggestions to think about:

- Consider using terms besides "meeting" such as "strategy session," "training," or "working party," so long as it isn't false advertising.
- Expect a different pace. A group of youths is apt to map out a pretty complete action plan in 45 minutes while adults may only decide on the goal and objective in that time period.

Recognition should not be overlooked or overused. Offering to write letters of recommendation that praise an individual's involvement is one important gesture. Many colleges and universities claim they select candidates who have made an impact locally or globally. In addition, many local, state, national, and international organizations champion ordinary young people who are doing extraordinary things. Give careful thought to the pros and cons of nominating a single individual rather than a group for an award because of the potential drawback to undermining solidarity.

Chapter IV

ADVOCACY SKILL-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

“If you ever think you are too small to be effective,
you’ve never been in bed with a mosquito.”
~ Anita Roddick, Founder of the Body Shop

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens
can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”
~ Margaret Mead

These quotes underscore a central challenge: how to transform low expectations and defeatist attitudes into sustained action and community problem solving. Exploring many advocacy strategies builds self-confidence as well as group solidarity and its potential power. The interactions and relationships that result from discussing the pros and cons of an issue, exchanging views about specific tactics, practicing presentation techniques, etc. are as critical as mastering the skills themselves.

“Hang time” and fun experiences combined with advocacy training all are necessary for group cohesion. For this reason, many of the skills described can be introduced in informal and conversational settings, as well as adapted for more structured workshops and conferences. Also, the accompanying action handbook, *YOUTH! THE 26% SOLUTION*, can be used as a conversation starter, for example, discussing various surveys and other exhibits in the “Showcase of Youth Productions.”

How can the group assess training needs?

This chart can size up the perceived needs and help prioritize training needs. Another benefit of this assessment is to determine whether any responsibility would be off-limits to young activists. This tool also is designed to help identify individuals in the group with expertise and experience who may be able to lead specific training activities. (See Appendix, "Sample Questionnaire: Youth Roles," for a formatted template.)

POTENTIAL YOUTH ROLES	RED LIGHT Not appropriate	YELLOW LIGHT Training needed	GREEN LIGHT No training needed	YES, I could help with training
Recruit youths				
Recruit adults				
Run meetings				
Facilitate discussion				
Help resolve conflicts				
Devise an action plan				
Participate in long-term strategic planning				
Develop a budget				
Help write a grant				
Meet potential funders				
Apply for a paid position				
Hire and evaluate staff				
Create a survey				
Canvas door-to-door				
Research an issue				
Speak to a youth group				
Set up a phone tree				
Create flyer/poster				
Write an article or letter to the editor				
Design a website				
Start a list-serve				

POTENTIAL YOUTH ROLES	RED LIGHT Not appropriate	YELLOW LIGHT Training needed	GREEN LIGHT No training needed	YES, I could help with training
Photograph or videotape				
Perform (improv, rap, street theater, etc.)				
Lead a workshop				
Plan a youth summit				
Speak at a conference				
Organize a town forum				
Draft a news release				
Call news media outlets				
Be interviewed by reporters				
Contact legislators				
Arrange a meeting with decision-makers				
Meet with legislators or their staff				
Testify at a hearing				
Help plan a rally				
Engage in sit-in or other non-violent protest				
Invite speakers, celebrities, VIPs				
Serve as a member on the Board of Directors				

When can advocacy training be counter-productive?

Usually real-time training is a better investment because it is no secret that the best way to retain what you've learned is to practice it immediately. This is one reason to provide specific trainings when needed, rather than offer a series of generic leadership workshops at a conference. However, it may make more sense logistically and be cheaper to present a range of skill-based training at a retreat or regional summit and plan to do booster sessions later at the local levels if necessary. A broad menu of sessions encourages youths (and adults) to experiment with a variety of different community organizing and lobbying roles.

In either case, it is wise for a few people in the group to outline specific objectives and make sure the trainer or facilitator incorporates your particular advocacy issue to make a generic youth empowerment workshop relevant. This planning group also should create a simple evaluation so that participants give feedback on all the sessions they attended.

Regardless when workshops are held, here are a handful of mistakes to avoid:

- **FORMAL TRAINING.** It may be far less effective than learning by doing. Osmosis combined with inventiveness can produce surprising results.
- **ADULT CLONING.** A pre-determined set of leadership and advocacy skills, for example, the ABCs of writing a news release the way PR firms do. This approach can undermine unconventional and imaginative approaches that may offer an element of surprise and succeed far better than traditional methods of capturing the attention in the competitive news media arena. Sometimes there is a real advantage for not knowing the "adult way" of doing things so that young people invent and experiment with new tactics.
- **TOO OVER-REHEARSED.** Once young activists become so practiced and polished, they lose their natural honesty that enhances their influence and credibility. Standard formulas tend to squeeze out more creative approaches, which is a key reason why to collaborate with youths in the first place.
- **POOR TIMING.** Skills introduced months ago but which were never put into action may be forgotten.
- **YOUTHS ONLY.** Adult activists also should participate in advocacy trainings.
- **INAPPROPRIATENESS.** A training that is not age appropriate, not culturally sensitive, and not interactive.
- **LACK OF LEADERSHIP.** Poor presenters or facilitators who lack passion and energy or who are too serious or inflexible.

How can we save money on trainings and workshops?

First of all, use or modify the numerous training activities described in this manual. Some of the following suggestions are repeated elsewhere in response to other questions.

- **TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES.** Many young people have done rope courses and other exercises to build group solidarity. Instead of paying outsiders, explore whether several members of the group might be willing to put their minds together and run this part of the program. Case in point: An ice storm in Kansas prevented a trainer from getting to the conference site so, at the last moment, several students along with the other 75 youths devised a three-hour program. The response to the evening was great and the reliance on one another proved to be the ultimate team building event.
- **ENLIST YOUTHS INVOLVED IN OTHER ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS.** Scout for youths and those in their early 20s who have firsthand experience in running meetings, writing grants, recruiting and publicizing a campaign, etc. and can share what they've learned. (These presenters should be paid honoraria plus travel, especially if professional trainers are receiving compensation.)
- **RECIPROCATE WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.** Many organizations have similar youth-led advocacy curricula or adult-youth partnership training activities that can be adapted. With a bit of foresight, trainings can be swapped between different organizations and this can eliminate the cost of hiring trainers. Strengthening these alliances and informal networks also can help during crucial stages of a campaign, such as mobilizing a big turnout for a rally.
- **PEER-TO-PEER EXCHANGES.** The Arsalyn Foundation (www.arsalyn.org) is one example of a program that pays for young activists to visit another youth-led initiative and vice versa. This exchange of tactics, especially unorthodox strategies, can be useful even if one group is working on a very different issue. For example, youths who developed interactive web site could teach this organizing method, and activists who testified before a legislative committee can walk others through this scenario.
- **INVOLVE LOBBYISTS.** People who spend time regularly monitoring the latest developments in the legislative arena can provide valuable information on specific proposals and explain opportunities for ordinary people to influence decision-makers. Be aware of several potential problems: 1) some lobbyists may lecture and have difficulty making the legislative process interesting or relevant to youths; and 2) "hired guns" are often reluctant to have young amateurs lobby unless they feel certain these youths will follow their lead.
- **INVITE ELECTED OFFICIALS OR THEIR STAFF.** Usually a school board member, city council member, state legislator, a congressperson, perhaps the governor, or a cabinet secretary can be persuaded to speak with a group of constituents—even if they are not yet of voting age. Politicians can talk about legislation they are supporting or opposing, what's happened to similar bills in the past, and how your group can weigh in on the pending debate. Often the media will be interested and the possibility of news coverage

reduces the likelihood of a last minute cancellation by one of these bigwigs. Nonetheless, expect staff aides to fill in and always make a contingency plan.

- **VIDEOTAPE.** Turnover among youths and adults is inevitable. Footage from training sessions and advocacy exercises can help bring newcomers up to speed. Reviewing certain portions of a workshop can also serve as the booster session. For example, when planning a rally or a presentation to prominent decision makers, watch the TV news stories on the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT's 17-minute "Influential Young Advocates" video where young people use effective sound bites.

How can peer education training be combined with policy change?

Avoid the mistake of beginning a conference with an emphasis on environmental change and follow up with a peer education training that focuses on changing individual behavior. Because peer education is the comfort zone for youths and adults alike, what's likely to happen is that political advocacy will lose out. Trained peer educators' expertise and understanding of an issue gained from interactions with other youths should not be minimized. This information truly is power. They can teach decision-makers a great deal about effective and ineffective programs and policies.

When developing an action plan, a complementary approach can be ideal:

- target audiences to continue peer education outreach; and
- target decision-making bodies to advocate, for example, the need for funding certain programs, proposed local or state legislation.

One example might be peer educators intent on extending their HIV prevention presentations to other grades and youth groups but who also want to push for a school-based health center, as well as additional teen services in the community. This multi-pronged advocacy campaign might concentrate on the school board as well as a non-profit clinic that might expand its outreach to this age group.

A modified version of the parable "The Good Samaritan" is presented below and can be helpful in highlighting the potential lasting impact of an advocacy campaign that can complement a community awareness initiative.

A girl was standing at the side of a river and saw someone flailing around in the water. She jumped in and swam toward the drowning man. With all her strength, she managed to save him. As she caught her breath, she saw another person being carried downstream. Again, she leapt into the rushing waters and, though more slowly this time, she dragged this woman to safety. But then she heard the screams of more drowning victims. With Herculean effort, she was able to save just one of them. In the meantime, two more people were swept through the rough water beyond her reach. She spent the rest of the day and every ounce of her

strength saving some and losing many others to the raging current. She was so busy being a good Samaritan that she never had a moment to go upstream and see why all the people were falling into the river.

In other words, changing rules, funding levels, policies, and laws go hand-in-hand with other efforts designed to produce lasting environmental change. For example, a law to require every passenger in a car to wear seat belts complements a "buckle up" public awareness campaign. One without the other would not be nearly as effective in changing human behavior and community norms. Another distinction is public policy cannot be overturned like a voluntary policy or program that is dependent on the support of a police chief, business owner, school principal, etc.

How important is an overnight retreat?

One wish frequently mentioned in retrospect is that a retreat would have helped the group bond. Also, a great deal can be accomplished in a concentrated amount of time. There is an important distinction between a one-day summit and a weekend conference where one or two evenings provide numerous opportunities for people to develop friendships that will carry on after everyone returns home. The benefits far outweigh the significant planning time and financial investment. A case in point: the youth and adult board members charged with designing a \$5 million Mosaic Youth Center in Crystal, Minnesota found an annual retreat vital to the five-year planning process. At these retreats, the board together with community partners, funders, and other representatives from this broad-based intergenerational coalition had the opportunity to get to know one another and make lots of headway on this ambitious project.

A retreat allows time to -

- Digest lots of information about an issue
- Hear inspiring speakers
- Feel part of a larger movement
- Learn advocacy skills
- Strategize in small groups
- Reach consensus on a plan of action
- Create a communication network for immediate and ongoing follow up
- Develop stronger ties with other activists

Laptops and printers help make ideas a reality whereby mission statements, brochures, survey forms, news releases and web sites can be created in a matter of hours rather than over weeks or months.

Of course, a retreat planning committee should include youths. An equal amount of time should be dedicated to post-retreat implementation. To maintain momentum, concrete steps should occur within two weeks after the retreat.

What start-up exercises promote group solidarity?

In addition to get-acquainted activities (see Appendix, "Icebreakers & Energizers"), here are some other examples that begin the process of defining individual roles and the overall group mission. In a relaxed and non-coercive way, the aim is to make sure every single person's voice is brought into the conversation.

- **SPOKES OF THE WHEEL** - In small groups, each person draws on a piece of paper a circle with half a dozen spokes. Everyone jots down words or phrases on what they hope to get out of this experience and their involvement as well as their unique interests and talents (writer, illustrator, photographer, debater, webmaster, etc.). The wheels are passed around and read by everyone without comment. Once each person gets his or her wheel, then the group discusses common themes as well as the talent pool. Finally, create two larger wheels with as many spokes as necessary to include the spectrum of responses.
- **GROUND RULES** - In the entire group, devote some time to gaining consensus on the expectations for all group members. Examples include: be open minded, listen even if you disagree, respect everyone, attend meetings, be punctual, accept criticism, no put-downs, what's said in the group remains confidential, etc. Figuring out roles and responsibilities for youth and adult members is also important. (See Chapter II: Recruitment and Chapter V: Conflicts & Challenges)
- **GROUP NAME** - Similar to creating a campaign slogan or project name (which is described later in this chapter), group identity is strengthened by this activity. In pairs or triads, generate as many names as possible. Remind everyone that it may be wise to avoid an abbreviation that will not make sense to the general public. Next the entire group can condense the list and choose the top five. After discussion on the mission and initial campaign, a final decision on the group name should be made.

What activities help bridge the generation gap?

These exercises are designed to encourage forthrightness and discourage demeaning or hurtful comments. Seemingly trivial issues can trigger divisions and while they cannot be anticipated, it's a good warm-up for the group to get in the habit of confronting more contentious questions. (See Appendix, "Icebreakers & Energizers," and "Ageism Awareness: Memory Lane Activity.")

- **WORD WATCH** - One of the ground rules to establish is what terms are acceptable and what aren't. Words easily offend or insult. Often adults unwittingly use vocabulary that young people may feel relegates them to second-class status. Although high school and even college students frequently refer to themselves as "kids," they may not be keen on adults referring to them or to even younger students that way. Get

their guidance on this term and other words commonly used by adults such as "children," "youngsters," "teens," and "adolescents." This conversation also should extend to gender, ethnic, and racial descriptors. One experienced youth worker often used the phrase, "So what do you guys think?" Eventually, one girl spoke up and said they weren't "guys" and preferred to be called "young women." "Latino" or "Hispanic," "black" or "African American," are other labels that should be discussed. This conversation may take a few minutes or a whole hour but resolving this seemingly trivial issue will enhance camaraderie and respect and avoid rifts later on. Something equally as important to be covered during this group discussion or a separate conversation is how the adult members want to be addressed ("Ms.," "Mr.," "coach," first name, nickname, etc.)?

- **YOUTH AND ADULT STEREOTYPES** - These exercises can be done separately or together but ask everyone to be honest while at the same time avoiding personal or hurtful comments. Have young people and adults divide into small groups. Half of the participating youths should create a short skit about negative perceptions of adults and the others should create an improv about positive characteristics. In separate groups the adults focus on both good and bad stereotypes about youths. After each group performs, have all the actors debrief with the audience. Allow at least 30 minutes or considerably longer with a larger group. A facilitator can wrap up this activity by asking for suggestions on the key elements for good and respectful intergenerational teamwork.

What icebreakers encourage group focus on advocacy?

Here are several interactive exchanges that youths and adults can experience together.

- **HOW I'D MAKE MY VOICE HEARD** - Have a ball or some other object, (even a balled up wad of paper), that can be tossed around. Invite everyone to stand in a large circle. Holding the object, the facilitator asks each person to forget one's talents or lack thereof and think about:
 - 1) your real name plus a nickname you like;
 - 2) your favorite song, musician, or group;
 - 3) your ideal venue or stage where you'd like to make your voice heard (for example, from the pulpit, or as a poet or politician).

The facilitator should start by revealing his/her thoughts and then toss the object to someone at the other end of the circle. Repeat the process until everyone has shared. If the facilitator sets a good pace, estimate that each person will average 30 seconds. Wrap up by asking members of the group if they are surprised by the similarities or the variety of thoughts expressed by everyone.

- **MAKE WAVES** - Invite everyone to sit in a circle or stand. Have a ball of yarn or string. Ask each person to think of how they did not remain silent but tried to advocate for change—even if they did not prevail. The facilitator may help to offer a few examples such as lobbying one's parents about driving privileges or changing a school policy. Adults should be encouraged to relate stories that might involve their lobbying for a new school or service, or perhaps contesting a traffic ticket in court. Whoever starts should be someone with a story that will inspire but not intimidate others. After the first person has shared, s/he should hold onto the end of the yarn while tossing the ball to someone else in the circle. The facilitator can conclude this activity by drawing attention to the massive web of yarn that represents the breadth of experience in the group. Adults often gain a deep appreciation for some of the young activists and similarly, young people also find it interesting to hear about those who were involved in the Vietnam War protests, anti-apartheid movement, etc. Allow between 10-30 minutes for a group of 30, depending on how talkative everyone chooses to be.
- **PEOPLE BINGO** - Create a bingo sheet with 25 squares and in each box either include silly and strategic questions (for example, who likes pistachio ice cream; who knows where the city council meets, etc.). Each person tries to find someone whose name can be filled in (see Appendix, "Icebreakers & Energizers: Bingo" for a sample board). You can have several winners: the first person to get 5 across, down, or diagonal; the person who has written an individual's name in the most squares, and the person who completed all four of the corner squares. Prizes enhance this 10-minute icebreaker.
- **WHY ME** - This circle activity is ideal for an overnight retreat after dinner. Light a candle (have a cup or saucer to catch the dripping hot wax) and turn off the lights. Have a couple of boxes of tissues handy. Encourage each individual to share personal reasons for why s/he is involved with this particular cause. Difficult family situations, concerns about close friends, and sadness are likely to pour forth, especially surrounding such issues as substance abuse, teen sexuality, and violence. People should only speak when and if they choose to and it should be emphasized that no one should feel in any way pressured to speak. It may be helpful to have a social worker or other trained professional available if anyone wants to talk further. As you might imagine, strong alliances between those with shared experiences may result. Time estimate ranges from 45 minutes to 2 hours.

What other activities convince young people to be change agents?

ad · vo · cate - one that pleads the cause of another;
one that defends or maintains a cause or proposal

pow · er - the ability or capacity to act effectively

youth empow`erment - to invest a young person with power

The true success stories in the Appendix are intended to help young people realize their potential clout. Select relevant examples of youths who have been instrumental in bringing about community change (additional information can be found on the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT website at www.YouthActivismProject.org). One technique to stimulate discussion is to distribute index cards with success stories on them and ask participants to talk about them in small groups. Possible questions might include:

- Why do you think the youth activists were taken seriously?
- How do you feel about this campaign?
- What ideas or strategies does this story spark in your mind?

A variation of this activity is to pass a different example to each small group. After some time for discussion, someone from each group would tell everyone about the youth-led campaign and someone else would share why these youths defied the odds and were taken seriously. Together they would share other comments and ask for additional reactions. If the room is quite large, consider having people use a microphone that commands more attention and also is good practice for public speaking.

To enhance these discussions, use the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT's "Influential Young Advocates" video that includes news stories and other footage. These vignettes can help young people to visualize some of the true stories and imagine themselves as agents for change too. A sophomore told our clearinghouse that she originally got the idea for planning a rally at the Kansas State Capitol back when she was in sixth grade, after seeing a video clip at a YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT workshop. This TV news clip featured thousands of students who converged at their statehouse and successfully lobbied for legislation that had been defeated three years in a row.

Another activity is to think of a few situations and then discuss the impact of one or two individuals versus several other people or 20 or 200. For example, if two students meet with the principal about a controversial issue, chances are they will be politely given the brush-off and not feel a sense of power. If two students are joined by a teacher, parent or community leader, how will the situation be different? The principal still may attempt to duck the issue but there is a greater level of accountability due to an adult being present.

The power dynamic will change dramatically if 20 students and adults request a roundtable discussion with the principal. If 200 students walk out, guess who holds more power than the powers-that-be? Numbers count but of course, numbers aren't everything.

Brainstorm other scenarios where a group of powerless people is able to get the powerful to respond. Dip back into history and talk about the civil rights marches and lunch counter sit-ins or the national grape boycott in support of farm workers. Find out who has tried to mobilize community support on a smaller scale (a petition drive, teach-in, human billboarding, etc.). Perhaps dig around for some local history and interview people active in the past.

How can the group decide among competing issues and solutions?

Even after a group has been meeting for a while, it's common to revisit fundamental questions about which issue should be the top priority. Here are a few methods that are designed to be interactive:

- **MACRO TO MICRO ISSUE IDENTIFICATION.** As a group, first come up with categories such as environment, poverty, etc. and then develop sub-categories where smaller groups develop a list of specific issues. For example, education might be divided into students' rights, policies and services, curricula, grading and testing, graduation requirements, etc.
- **PERSONAL PASSIONS.** Anyone who has a specific issue should complete the following sentence: "My concern or idea is..." Then this topic is announced to the group and posted. Once everyone has had a chance to introduce an issue, the times and locations for discussion on each topic are determined. People participate in as many small group caucuses as possible to refine the ideas. Highlights from each discussion are shared with the entire group.
- **SKITS.** This sort of improvisation has less of a classroom feel and can be used to boost brainstorming. A starter phrase might be "If I was the school superintendent..." or "If I won the lottery I would..." Fantasizing about solutions should engage the entire group, leading into more of a reality-based discussion later.
- **SITE VISITS.** Tour different facilities such as a health clinic, drop-in center, juvenile detention center, etc. and solicit ideas for improvements from staff and clients, inviting any of those interviewed to join in the process of identifying problems and exploring solutions. Neighborhood meetings can also enhance evaluation of services.
- **OUTSIDE SPEAKERS.** Invite elected officials, community leaders, and representatives from other organizations to talk about their top priorities and pending legislation.

- **COMMUNITY MAPPING.** Surveying neighborhoods block by block or comparing one community with another can reveal dozens of issues. One approach is to draw up a list of assets. This information provides a broad context for a multi-faceted community change agenda. This can be combined with some door-to-door canvassing using a short questionnaire. Consider whether a survey should be translated in other languages. U.S. Census data combined with the Global Information System (GIS) can be effective in plotting data on a computer generated map, for example, to compare the number of teen clinics based on population in different neighborhoods of a metropolitan area. The Youth Action Research Center (formerly the National Teen Action Research Center) of the Institute for Community Research in Connecticut and Movement Strategies based in California are among the leading experts in youth-led community mapping.
- **LOOK AND REACT.** A detailed proposal that includes a description, a sketch, and budget is posted. Blank index cards and specific suggestion cards are passed out, inviting everyone to make comments and raise more questions. This method encourages quieter people to share their views.

If there are several ideas with varying degrees of strength, see what everyone can agree on and build unity from there. Then consider some of the questions noted below, perhaps starting with small group breakouts. If there is no consensus, more research about the overarching problem is needed on other approaches as well as what else has been tried in the past. Encourage several complementary solutions that might reflect both short-term and long-term proposals. The following is a list of questions to consider when debating issues:

- Does this issue address a real need?
- Are we really passionate about this cause?
- Do we know enough about the economic conditions surrounding this issue?
- Has a similar campaign been tried before?
- Are our solutions achievable yet not too modest to seem insignificant?
- Who is expected to benefit as a result of this campaign?
- How soon might this change happen?
- Should we consider a more comprehensive approach?
- What potential support can we expect?
- What are our likely opponents and adversaries?
- Is this a good time of the year to launch this campaign?

For additional information regarding these issues, refer later in this chapter to the question, "How do we find relevance between a local issue and the legislative process?"

What are some effective research methods for documenting a problem?

Remember it's what you know, not who you know. That's why information is power. Detective work can be both dull and tedious or creative and empowering. Discuss a systematic research methodology, possibly at the local, state, regional, national, or even international level depending on the particular problem being investigated.

Besides gathering existing information, explore ways to collect new evidence through interviews, online surveys, anonymous questionnaires, polling, undercover compliance checks, etc. For example, students in downtown Houston used video cameras to contrast the blocks around their schools with suburban neighborhoods. This footage revealed tremendous disparities and increased the credibility of these young activists in their campaign that ultimately changed a zoning ordinance. Using cameras to document the quality of public schools or the lack thereof can be very effective, for example, Critical Exposure (www.criticalexposure.org). Also refer to the question, "How can we use technology to enhance political advocacy?" later in this chapter.

The Youth Leadership Institute and other organizations noted in the previous question have community mapping programs that seek to complete an inventory of services and other neighborhood assets as well as deficiencies. Rather than a single snapshot, this fuller picture increases the likelihood that a series of community action initiatives will be pursued. For example, one group determined that a city swimming pool was its top priority, but planned to use their findings as the foundation for a series of community action campaigns.

Official statistics are enormously useful but don't expect youths to believe or embrace this data. This perception differential is very real. Many young people find their impressions and experiences are at odds with the numbers generated by public and private agencies. Collecting information—even in unscientific and unorthodox ways—increases their ownership and confidence. Also, independent research inoculates youths against attacks that they are pawns of an adult-run advocacy campaign. Finally, the result can identify issues that have long been ignored or never been documented.

Create a series of questions directed at different audiences (ninth grader, school dropout, guidance counselor, principal, parent, recreation center director, youth director, police officer, local merchants, senior citizens, etc.) in order to reveal divergent points of view. Other tools include a simple phone survey or written questionnaire. This data can be effective in pinpointing specific issues and gauging support for possible solutions. A few general questions are outlined below.

<p>Possible questions directed toward Young people might include . . .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What do you want?➤ What do you need?➤ What do you like?➤ What do you dislike?➤ What problems do you experience?➤ How good are specific programs?➤ How might these be improved?➤ What services are missing?
<p>Possible questions directed toward parents, school staff, community organizations, and other adults might include . . .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What do you want for your children and teens?➤ What issues do you believe concern young people the most?➤ What are the major youth problems?➤ Which programs are good?➤ What services are ineffective?➤ What gaps exist?➤ What programs are needed most?

Youth-developed "report cards" which grade transportation, schools, social services, recreation centers, etc. can generate newsworthy information. Seek out someone at a public relations firm or local university that can give suggestions or evaluate the effectiveness of a questionnaire, survey, opinion poll, or focus group. Also request their help in creating a computer program to analyze the results.

How do we find relevance between a local issue and the legislative process?

Encourage the group to talk about the effectiveness of specific laws. Many believe laws do not change behavior. Certainly one can argue that the Civil Rights Act or Title IX did not erase discrimination, but these landmark statutes have changed society. Laws have the potential to spur new community norms, provide opportunities, and transform individual behavior. The impact usually is tied to the amount of money appropriated to implement and enforce, as well as publicize a new or amended law.

Unlike a rule or policy set voluntarily by an administrator of a business or organization that may vanish when a new boss takes over, a law lasts. In California, youths collaborated with adults in several cities to pass ballot initiatives that earmark 2.5% of the city budget for community youth development. This law provides a steady stream of dollars year after year. In Massachusetts, instead of relying on the leadership of current school superintendents across the state, gay and lesbian students sought protection and succeeded in amending the existing discrimination statute. The result was the Gay & Lesbian Student Safe Schools Act that provides funding for extracurricular gay/straight clubs.

If a bad or weak law is on the books, it is possible to amend or overturn it. A few examples for discussion might include a city ordinance relating to curfews, a state law requiring parent consent for minor's use of contraceptives, or the federal Higher Education Act that prohibits people convicted of drug offenses from receiving financial aid to college.

With a bit of research (refer to the next question) along with the support of political insiders, the legislative process can be a challenging but high impact approach to bringing about lasting community change.

How do we discover what proposals are moving through the legislative pipeline?

Why is it important to find out what legislation is moving ahead? One reason is most proposals are "dead upon arrival," in other words they stand little chance of action. Tracking an active bill provides a major opportunity to piggyback your idea, or to try to stall or stop it. Brainstorming in isolation and not knowing what decision-makers are debating doesn't make any sense. So here are some checkpoints to find out what is currently being considered and what may have happened. Consider forming subcommittee to assume this responsibility.

- City or County Council, sometimes called the Board of Supervisors or County Commission. Telephone or email the clerk and ask if any ordinances have been proposed or debated on a specific issue in the past few years or at the present time. Then you may want to follow up and ask to speak to the staff person who handles the issue of concern. After you get some preliminary information, you may be ready to contact your own council member. Web sites often provide a brief overview and history.
- Mayor, City Manager, County Executive, Governor, or the Lt. Governor may have created a special task force or commission to focus on a specific problem, for example, the Governor of Maine's Communities for Children Initiative.
- Police Chief, as well as a citizen crime task force or the community relations unit, a gang task force, etc. may be developing recommendations.
- Department of Parks and Recreation, especially the offices that provide services to children and youths, may be another source of information.
- School Board, officially called the Board of Education, should not be overlooked. Speak to the clerk or secretary of the local school board. An increasing number of school districts have student representatives, a few of whom have full voting rights. You can learn about pending school funding issues, curricula development, school start times, policies regarding student and staff safety, sexual harassment policies, etc.
- State Board of Education - Statewide policies regarding year round schooling, graduation requirements, state tests, etc. often are determined by those who serve on the state board of education, usually appointed by the Governor. The following states have at least one student representative on the school board: Alaska, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, North Carolina, Nevada, Texas, Vermont, and Washington.

- State Legislature - Besides web sites, most statehouses have a toll-free number to a legislative information office so it is easy to find out what bills have been introduced on a specific issue. This reference office can do a free computer search. Give them keywords such as "minors" and "substance abuse" or "driver's license." This office can identify all legislation that pertains to that subject and send you copies of those bills. Most websites make it simple to download bills. Once you know which committees have jurisdiction over the legislation, calls to committee staff can reveal what proposals have been debated in past sessions. This information may provide clues about the future.

Online research, however, needs to be viewed as only the first step. There is no substitute for talking with those who are well informed, including lobbyists, legislative aides, and lawmakers themselves. Once again, the Internet can provide a good head start prior to talking with the insiders as well as those on the outside who seek to influence. Download summaries and introductory speeches of a bill that are far easier to read and understand than the legislation itself.

- Visit the web sites on elected officials to get biographical information. It can be very useful to know where they live, their backgrounds, educational degrees, charity and religious affiliations, and especially whether they have children. This is relevant because a politician may be more responsive to certain issues. Also, you can strategically recruit young people who may live in the same neighborhood or attend the same school(s). Time and time again, this access is undeniably powerful—more so than the high-paid lobbyists who wine and dine lawmakers.
- Check out the web sites of advocacy organizations to learn about their legislative priorities and positions on specific bills. The government relations department can be an information goldmine. Because legislative action can happen quickly and often behind-the-scenes, double-check information and rely on numerous sources.

Keep in mind that every city, county, and state operate under a different set of rules, many of which were determined years ago by the state legislature. "Home Rule" means decisions are made locally, whereas "preemption" usually refers to state authority that overrides or "preempts" local decision-making. Seeking a waiver or exemption is easier than a campaign to overturn state preemption on such issues as the sale and accessibility of alcohol, tobacco, and guns.

What process helps to define our mission and campaign name?

The process of putting words down on paper serves multiple purposes. A brief mission statement functions as the compass and charts the direction. Developing a couple of sentences requires the group to define what it hopes to accomplish. An official mission statement has the psychological advantage that this is not merely talk but a real campaign. Moreover, this statement is an important introduction to share with potential funders, organizations that are considering endorsing your cause, and the general public.

Often it is more efficient to have several people come up with a rough draft that the entire group refines together. One step-by-step approach is to:

- 1) state the problem briefly
- 2) summarize the goal/solution
- 3) edit all these statements into a few sentences

Make copies of this draft language and let people fiddle with it. Encourage dissension early on so rather than after group consensus has taken root, making it more difficult for individuals to speak up. If possible, come back to finalize the mission statement at the next meeting.

Based on the mission, everyone should be involved in creating an official organization name if it doesn't exist, or a campaign name/slogan. This step adds credibility to a youth-driven initiative that has to overcome attitudes that it is a "little" civic education project or school assignment. Another advantage is a catchy name and/or slogan is easy to remember and if it's short enough can work as web site address.

The following outline is another hands-on activity that may take between 15-30 minutes. This can be done either by the full group or in smaller teams. Suggested materials include colored markers, butcher paper, and poster board. After consensus is reached on the mock-up, find a computer and printer. (See Appendix, "Wordplay & Campaign Name Worksheet" for a reproducible handout.)

MAKE IT OFFICIAL!	
Step 1: WORDPLAY	Begin by jotting down some key words and phrases that describe the campaign. Someone in the group should record all the ideas, ideally on butcher paper for everyone to see. Think of terms and expressions about the issue. Also, consider including words that tell the world this is a youth initiative.
Step 2: CAMPAIGN NAME	Review all the words and terms. Chances are a clever slogan may emerge from the list of words or phrases. It's wise to avoid abbreviations that come across as a scrambled alphabet to the general public and the media. For example, "Youth Alive" reinforces the

	mission of a gun violence prevention advocacy group in Oakland.
Step 3: LOGO	Consider designing a logo or some other graphic illustration that enhances the meaning of the campaign name. This symbol can be used on business cards, flyers, petitions, brochures, bumper stickers, buttons, websites, etc. For example, the Youth Activism Project’s Global Action initiative called School Girls Unite created a logo that includes a chalkboard—the common classroom tool in developing countries--superimposed with the silhouettes of three girls standing above a globe.
Step 4: SLOGAN	Take a few minutes to brainstorm a catchy slogan that also adds meaning to the campaign name. Youth Making A Change created the slogan, “Something to do, some place to go” in its successful citywide effort to get a youth space in downtown San Francisco. “Talk to Us Before It’s TWO Late” was dreamed up by Louisiana students concerned about teen pregnancy and eager to work with parents and policy-makers.
Step 5: MOCK-UP	Use colored markers and poster board to present a possible campaign name, logo, and slogan to solicit reaction from the entire group. It’s also good to test this creation with a few people who are unfamiliar with the community change initiative.

Once agreement is reached, the next stage is to produce the final artwork using a desktop computer. In addition to the name, logo, and possible slogan, the letterhead should include a complete mailing address (with e-mail and web site if available), as well as a contact name and daytime telephone number(s). Again, it may be useful to include in small type the names of the officers, board members, adult advisors, or funders that will enhance a sense of legitimacy. This official letterhead can be used for correspondence, fundraising letters, news releases, etc. Finally, once it has been revised and reviewed, uniformity will be brought to the campaign by printing up the mission statement on the official letterhead as well.

As in every other stage of the process, it is important to include youths in the decision-making stage of establishing the campaign’s public persona. Avoid inviting in public relations firms or other outside assistance until after major decisions have been made regarding the slogan, campaign name, logo, etc. This undermines collaboration with young people. Be sure to include youths in discussions of alternative approaches and budget constraints. All-inclusion promotes a sense of trust and confidence.

What action planning steps are recommended?

After one or several ideas to address an issue have been identified, the group can venture ahead in mapping out a blueprint on how to proceed.

Many students have drawn up numerous action plans at youth leadership conferences. Prior experience will not pose a problem but cynicism may. This can be yet another exercise with no real world application. The challenge is to make sure it is an authentic action planning. Once again, encourage people to talk about the potentials and pitfalls of this strategy phase, and be open if they want to experiment with an alternative process.

Draw up a step-by-step game plan, blueprint, or whatever you choose to call it (see Appendix, "Who Does What When Worksheet" for a sample blueprint). Emphasis should be given to achievable short-term goals to help establish a track record and also test how well specific tasks get accomplished.

- **ACTIONS** - What needs to be done?
- **BY WHOM** - Who will take action?
- **BY WHEN** - By what date will the action be done?
- **RESOURCES/SUPPORT** - What financial, human, political, and other resources are needed? What resources are available?
- **POTENTIAL BARRIERS** - What individuals and/or organizations might resist? How?
- **COMMUNICATION** - What organizations, allies, and news media need to be informed about the action?

More ambitious and comprehensive goals should be noted and reassessed frequently by the group. The timeline should take into account school events such as exams and homecoming as well as holidays and vacations. Besides those who are coordinating specific tasks, someone else should be responsible for providing friendly reminders about sticking to self-imposed deadlines. Consider setting up task forces or subcommittees that will carry out certain components of the action plan. One successful campaign coordinated by 8th graders established a Public Awareness Group, Legislation Group, Editorials Group (news media), Video Group, and Rally Group.

An action plan should be regarded as an evolving guide, one that constantly will be revised as more information is obtained, as more people join the effort, as competing proposals emerge, and as the political wind shifts.

How do we secure necessary funding?

For those advocacy campaigns that live from grant to grant, the budget realities need to be spelled out. Too often, the staff are not forthcoming about limited financial resources while young people flirt with costly initiatives. By communicating budgetary constraints to young advocates from the beginning, sudden disappointment can be avoided. The budget situation should be factored into all strategy discussions. Also, youths can play pivotal roles in co-authoring grant proposals, meeting with potential funders, and conducting fundraising events.

Here's one strategy to toss into the ring as the group brainstorms:

- Write a short article and send it to a weekly community newspaper, as well as neighborhood and faith-based newsletters, etc. In a couple of brief paragraphs describe: 1) the goals of your advocacy initiative; 2) a specific upcoming event; 3) a ballpark figure for how much money is needed; and 4) in-kind donations that are needed such as use of a computer, photocopier, postage meter, etc. If necessary, find a nonprofit organization willing to be the fiscal agent so that a contributor can take a tax deduction.
- Convert this article into a one-page flyer. Post it and also use it when meeting with religious and community leaders. Ask for their financial help. When a \$25 donation moves you down the street, you can say to the next minister: Will you join the other church and support this event of ours?
- Present your one-page flyer to the owners of local businesses where you spend money, such as restaurants, theaters, and bowling alleys. Some merchants will donate pizza for a meeting or event; others may make significant financial contributions.
- Approach printers about donating their services. Company information can be included on brochures or posters that amounts to free advertising for the business.
- Use the same announcement and take it to the powers-that-be, such as the Mayor, Police Chief, School Superintendent, and City Council. In exchange for their financial help, offer to present a report with recommendations after the trip. Incidental expenses can come out of their discretionary fund.
- Investigate where there are local programs, such as Youth As Resources and the Urban League, that offer mini-grants specifically for youth-designed projects.

- Explore larger grants from foundations and corporations. An increasing number of private foundations such as Surdna, are supporting "effective citizenry" and advocacy by youths. Also investigate state and federal governments; your community-based effort may be able to take advantage of grants for after school activities, substance abuse prevention, and numerous other public monies. Some proposals require youth involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. Consider some training for both adults and youths on grant writing.
- Grab a bucket. Create a slogan for your cause, wrap it around a bucket, and pin the same slogan to your shirt. Go out to busy intersections with your bucket. "Canning" can bring in hundreds of dollars quickly. Check to see if you need a city solicitor's permit and insurance policy for this "no strings attached" fundraising operation.
- Many old-fashioned methods of fundraising are still very effective, like raffles, bake sales, book fairs, car washes, and on a larger scale, auctions and benefit concerts.

The bottom line is that the more people you ask, the greater the odds are of winning. Collecting the first few donations is the toughest part. But initial funds encourage increased financial support. Once you can say, "Will you join these other folks who are supporting our cause?" others are more likely to jump on the bandwagon. Persistence pays!

What activities help identify our audience, including key decision-makers?

Have a wide-ranging group discussion on mobilizing support for your initiative. This strategy session is separate from targeted recruiting to enlarge the core group or to enhance its representation to reflect greater diversity in terms of geography, socioeconomics, ethnicity, and so on. Several categories of different audiences might include the following:

- Audience 1—STUDENT GROUPS, YOUTH SERVING ON BOARDS, AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS. They are most helpful in seeking endorsements and participating in particular phases of the campaign, such as writing letters or attending rallies. (Consider whether their involvement would cause other groups not to support you and if so, is that tradeoff worth it.)
- Audience 2—POTENTIAL FUNDERS. They can provide substantial resources. (Consider the time required for grant writing and assess the limitations on how money can be used.)
- Audience 3—PR AND NEWS MEDIA. They are invaluable in increasing public awareness. (Consider publicity tactics besides capturing headlines, such as "toilet talk," where messages are posted in bathroom stalls; sidewalk stenciling, movie ads where slides are shown in the theater before the previews, blogs, etc.)
- Audience 4—KEY POWER BROKERS. They provide a great service by sponsoring proposals. Also, they may include specific decision-makers whose votes are needed. (Additional research may be needed to figure out what institution has the authority to respond to your proposal. Investigate who are the key individuals, for example, the CEO of a TV station, the School Board Members, or the chairperson of a City Council committee.)

Once the target audiences are determined, write each category on a large piece of paper. Have everyone rotate to each "audience" and write down names of individuals, groups, media outlets, etc. whom they can think of. Or invent a game of "Who's Who" to figure out who knows a VIP or knows someone who might have connections with influential people. This process will help the group determine which audience to concentrate on at what stage of its campaign. As the network grows and more information is collected, these lists will expand and new target audiences will be identified.

What hands-on activities help frame the issue for different audiences?

It is essential to be able to say what you are fighting for rather than what you are fighting against. That means stating the problem and emphasizing the proposed solution.

Getting an issue to stand out is harder than ever. The challenge is to invent ways to talk publicly about a problem that suffers from being viewed as insignificant or a long-standing concern that people have grown weary of. Compelling comparisons can jolt public awareness about a problem. Have a small team focus on how to frame the debate. Make sure to use available statistics to draw some stunning contrasts that can be incorporated in a news release, public testimony, speech, or flyer. Here are a few examples.

“Why can a kid get a gun in a neighborhood in a few hours, but have to take a bus outside the neighborhood to buy school supplies?” said Sherman Spears with Teens on Target at a press conference in Oakland, California. This observation was the quote that appeared in newspaper articles and helped persuade the city council to pass a gun control ordinance.

“The neighbors adjacent to our school are growing a dump instead of flowers,” claimed a group of students from Massachusetts in their letter to the City Council. Their council member who met with them at their high school responded promptly by getting the mountain of dangerous trash hauled away. The school principal had tried for three years to get the city to clear the dump.

A California high school student came up with the following analogy and used it in her award-winning 30-second TV spot that helped pass a stronger DWI state law: “If a foreign government executed 65 Americans today, we’d declare war tomorrow. Yet, that’s how many of us will be put to death today and every day this year by drunk drivers.” Her PSA with powerful visuals and sound effects ends with this tag line: “It’s time to lower the legal blood alcohol limit. It’s time to stop the killing.” (This powerful spot is featured on the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT’s “Influential Young Advocates” video.)

Peer educators in Buffalo, New York learned of a proposal being considered by the state legislature to reduce funding for comprehensive school health education. One high school student commented, “My friends and classmates are dying from alcohol, drugs, and AIDS. The proposed cut for school health would mean only 5¢ per student. That’s the price of a stick of gum. Is that all we are worth?”

The trick to creating these sound bites is that they not only *sound* natural, but *are* natural. Instead of a rambling statement, a hard-hitting 20-second comment stands a better chance of being a quote on the local news. (See Appendix, “Building Sound Bites Worksheet” for a reproducible handout). Think about cultivating a reporter’s interest that might result in a series of articles about different phases of the advocacy campaign. Furthermore, an article in the daily newspaper often signals credibility, so radio and TV media feel it is a safe and important enough story for them to cover.

What are some unique youth-oriented publicity strategies?

Show a few clips from the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT's "Influential Young Advocates" or other videos and as a group discuss the effectiveness of various sound bites, answers to reporters' questions, chants, banners, and other visuals used to capture attention. Young people can approach the news media in unusual ways that most adults wouldn't dare do as professionals or simply because of the lack of protocol.

One such example of an unconventional approach is "Donuts to D.J.s." A group of high school students were planning a rally and feared that the turnout would be low. During morning rush hour, without appointments they went in pairs to all the radio stations, hand-carrying their news release along with donuts. The students' ploy worked and they managed to get free airtime to talk about the rally. This publicity increased the crowd and also alerted other media outlets, which covered the event.

One other strategy is to provide television stations with "B Roll" footage that can be incorporated as part of a news story. Many schools have decent equipment that can be used. Students in New York videotaped a toxic landfill in their town and this footage was incorporated into a number of national network stories including the Today Show. Sending a videotape along with information about a particular campaign to television shows may succeed in getting an assignment editor or producer's attention, who may then decide to send out a camera crew to film a segment.

Discuss the news media's appetite for novelty and controversy. Divide the group into small teams to dream up an unusual event that offers novelty and controversy, data and drama. How could a town forum, news conference, or a march attract newspaper photographers and TV cameras? Invite the teams to share their ideas with the entire group. This can lead into realistic event planning that would include drawing up a list of needs and a preliminary budget.

More examples are included in the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT's *Youth! The 26% Solution*.

How can we avoid boring “civics” lessons about the legislative process?

The first priority is to demystify the legislative process and emphasize certain stages in legislative debate when involvement by young activists is crucial. One quick, lively opener is to show the classic “I’m Just A Bill” by School House Rock, which is familiar to many. Although this two-minute animated video (available from some public libraries and video rental outlets) highlights the U.S. Congress, there are parallels with the lawmaking process in the state legislature and local government that make it applicable to a discussion on the local legislative process.

Instead of a step-by-step “how a bill becomes a law” presentation that is apt to be a replay of many government classes, conjure up an interactive obstacle course. Select a bill that became law in the past few years, for instance, the graduated driver’s license legislation, which also impacts young people. Find out the bill’s path through the statehouse along with the name of the House and Senate sponsor, House and Senate committees, committee votes, and floor votes. Copies of testimony by opponents and supporters can be obtained from the committees. Assign roles to everyone. Include brief background notes with some talking points. Encourage everyone to improvise and have fun. Find someone who really understands the process to act as the narrator to fill in the blanks and move the “players” from one stage of the legislative process to the next. Expect a lively skit that will be far more memorable than a tiring lecture with overheads and flow charts.

The importance of making one’s voice heard in less familiar public forums should be stressed. Meetings with local lawmakers and their aides occur throughout the year whereas at the statehouse drafting legislation often gets underway in November or December, one or two months before the official start of the session. Consider getting an insider to speak, ideally an elected official or young staffer who’s a good storyteller and can make the process come alive. These aides, as well as lobbyists, can provide ongoing intelligence during the unpredictable stages of the process. (Refer to *Youth! The 26% Solution*, Chapter 4: Moving Your Proposal through the Legislature, which pinpoints stages of the process ideal for youth intervention.)

How do we learn different lobbying strategies?

While it is helpful to have some background information about the decision-makers whom you are trying to inform and educate on a particular issue, the bigger challenge is how young advocates avoid the so-called "cute" syndrome. Politicians typically demonstrate a patronizing attitude toward students and view their involvement as merely a good learning experience. This is why young people have to prove they know what they are talking about with firsthand accounts and data so that they may command respect.

Because students are often given assignments to write elected officials, it takes some work to persuade young people that letters can change minds. A state legislator once announced on the chamber floor that he "got so much mail in support of that bill!" that he had to vote for it. How many letters did this Utah senator actually get? Six. When using this example for the purpose of discussion, ask for guesses on the number of letters sent to this senator. This anecdote drives home the point that a couple of hard-hitting letters actually carry weight.

Online technology means new modes of interacting with elected officials and their staff. E-mail reduces telephone tag that's inevitable during the school day. Video conferencing is another possibility. Young people may relate well to staff aides in their twenties and perhaps interest them in attending various events, such as a student photography show or a Battle of the Bands. Inviting VIPs to speak at a conference, to a youth group, or at school assembly are other possibilities. In Washington, a statewide group of students met regularly with U.S. Senator Patty Murray to discuss a range of legislative issues. Recruiting support from folks who live in a committee chair's district or are constituents of other key policy-makers translates into powerful access. As a group, explore some untried ways to getting the ear of these politicians.

Additional strategies, from meeting with legislators to testifying, are described in the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT's paperback entitled *Youth! The 26% Solution*.

What are some effective role-play scenarios?

Here are a handful of exercises that can be easily adapted. When conducting them, everyone should be encouraged to avoid reading a speech and to speak from one's heart *and* head. Don't worry about jitters or stutters. These role-plays reveal gaps in knowledge or understanding, for example, how to respond to counter-arguments or more specific statistics. Following a role-play, discuss additional research and possible visuals such as graphs, photographs, video testimonials, etc. (See Appendix for reproducible role-play handouts.)

- **USING THE TELEPHONE:** Some people are better than others at using the telephone. Asking for information or trying to set up a meeting can be tricky. How you introduce yourself on the other end of the phone can set you up for success or failure. The receptionist or executive secretary can be very skilled at short-circuiting or derailing the call. In pairs or triads, practice a variety of spontaneous telephone exchanges. Roles can be switched so every one has a turn initiating the call (see Appendix, "Telephone Tips for Young Activists" handout).
- **MEETING WITH INFLUENTIAL PUBLIC FIGURES:** Run through a meeting situation with a bigwig, limiting your group to no more than four to six people. Besides the decision-maker and his/her aide, choose one person to "chair" or lead the meeting, and others in the delegation who should plan and rehearse presenting specific points, such as describing firsthand experience or presenting survey results. Figure out who should plan on answering questions and practice at least one response with "We would like to get back to you on that" which avoids a poorly thought out answer and affords the opportunity for follow-up. Prepare for meeting that might last less than 10 minutes but also practice enough conversation if it extends to half an hour.
- **PUBLIC DEBATES:** Develop a situation—real is preferred over hypothetical—where participants play different characters and reveal the divergent opinions on a given proposal. For example, take a proposal being debated by the city council and have several people assume the role as elected officials, others represent business interests and community leaders, and of course, young advocates. Similar role-plays can be developed around a zoning commission, school board, state legislative committee, etc.
- **VIDEO INTERVIEWS:** Use a video camera and let teams of two to four people rehearse testifying and responding to questions they might be asked by decision-makers or reporters. Students occasionally get grilled about why they are playing hooky or why they were allowed to participate but not their classmates during such interviews. Reporters may throw some curve balls; for example, maybe a coalition is pushing for drug treatment services but the spokesperson gets asked about decriminalizing marijuana. It is important to practice individual responses to such questions since it's possible that a casual answer could end up being in the morning

newspaper, rather than anything said about drug rehab. Be on guard for "gotcha" questions. Without sounding like a robot, questions can be deflected with such responses as "We haven't studied that aspect of the situation," and immediately drawing the audience back to the main message. Again, sound bites help control the direction of an interview. Watch the tape, laugh, and do a few more takes, but try not to overdo it. Too much practice will dull enthusiasm and spontaneity when it comes time for the real thing!

How important is it to prepare young advocates for the opposition?

Extremely important. The YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT has heard elected officials, their staff, and lobbyists make unflattering comments about young advocates that range from mild to incendiary. Here are a few examples uttered quietly or made publicly.

- Patronizing - "This is great practice for when you are older."
- Demeaning - "You should be in school."
- Insulting - "You don't know what you're talking about."
- Attacking - "Adults are using children to buttress their argument."
- Lying - "Your facts are baseless. These arguments are morally offensive."

If you are unaccustomed to walking the corridors of a big city council or state capitol as most people are, the atmosphere can be intimidating. Even at a rally where youths outnumber others, a few vocal opponents can capture the TV cameras with inflammatory language directed against young activists. Practice role-plays that include ignoring nasty and untruthful comments, as well as remaining polite and sticking to your message.

In the 1950s, Rosa Parks didn't decide one day to refuse to move to the back of the bus; her act of civil disobedience occurred after months of rigorous practice. A more recent example occurred in the Missouri state legislature. Middle school students advocated for stronger gun control legislation and were taunted by gun owners. Prior training helped the teens maintain the high ground, unlike their opponents who made rude verbal attacks. This tense confrontation gave the young activists a greater sense of legitimacy in the eyes of elected officials and news media.

How do we go about organizing a rally at the statehouse or a “lobby day”?

To begin the brainstorming process, look at the YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT’s “Influential Young Advocates” video of youth-led rallies and solicit reactions. Then explore specific questions such as:

- How large a turnout is hoped for?
- Will such an event help in our grassroots organizing?
- What’s a ballpark figure in terms of cost?
- Is there an organization or a coalition willing to provide staff support and resources?
- Will the sponsors overwhelm the role youths play in planning and running the rally?
- Are certain organizations worried that such a political event could jeopardize their tax-exempt status?

This type of mobilization takes an enormous amount of work but the results can be historic. Beyond the arduous planning and headaches, a lobby day can be both a culminating event and a catalyst for further advocacy.

A research phase needs to explore whether this idea is feasible. Seek out answers to the above questions, as well as others that might come up. If there is consensus to proceed, develop a timeline. The next step is the formation of committees with clear-cut responsibilities. For a youth rally in Nebraska, for example, four intergenerational committees were created: logistics, recruitment, legislative, and media. An ongoing challenge, especially with a project of this scale, is for staff and adult volunteers not to take over when they may be spending ten times the amount of time as those who are full-time students. Youth stipends for part-time positions can minimize this inevitable dilemma.

A series of overnight retreats can be more effective than short half-day meetings when there is neither time for the planning committee to bond or accomplish much work. Since many participants attending the rally may have little knowledge about legislative issues or understand the process, statehouse events often include an educational component that may increase “excused absences” for students. Advocacy workshops, a role-play activity, and teach-ins led by youths can be created and tested at these retreats.

To prepare young advocates for meetings with legislators and their staff aides, have a small team draft a one-page statement with the main message and supporting facts. These “Talking Points” are not intended to take the place of individually crafted arguments but rather to emphasize the importance of stating one’s views and not straying too far from the issue at hand. Credible information from constituents has the power to motivate or shame legislators to pay attention.

The YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT can provide leads to youth and adult rally coordinators in states across the country that can share lessons from their experiences. For example, at one annual Kansas STAR Rally, every group brought along a city council member, school

principal, or some other local community leader. At the annual Lobby Day in Albany, a firm was hired to arrange appointments in advance for New York City students to meet with their state legislators. In Alaska, a particularly effective post-rally strategy was to ask parents to write a note to specific legislators thanking them for meeting with their son or daughter. This message, which included a plug for a legislative proposal, helped the coalition prevail in winning votes in Juneau.

How can we use technology to enhance political advocacy?

“It’s pointless for me to teach young people what to do – it will be outdated . . . What I can do is encourage them to be flexible and help them adapt to the unpredictable future.”

~ Jacek Jakubowski, Universal Youth Academy in Poland

Digital technology is in its infancy but its potential for grassroots organizing already is evident. A prime example was the successful global mobilization for the International Landmine Treaty. Social Networking Sites, listserves, Instant Messenger, blogs as well as other free online communications vehicles that have yet to be invented promise many more avenues for activism.

Advocacy organizations are creating sophisticated systems. Alerts, announcements, articles, and newsletters all can be sent out instantly at no cost to specific zip codes. Software can track who’s been at meetings regularly and perhaps ask for these people to help facilitate an upcoming meeting in an effort to enhance capacity and rotate leadership.

SNS, emails, are not a substitute for face-to-face contact or phone calls. Technological tools still can be utilized; for instance, a photograph can be scanned onto a flyer, making it an eye-catching announcement. But it should never function as a replacement for traditional methods of political engagement.

Technology also can be an enormous boost in terms of research. Community mapping using U.S. Census data and the Global Positioning System can contrast certain zip codes and income levels to make visual comparisons, such as the number of community centers on different sides of the railroad tracks.

Presentation of research findings to the decision-makers and the news media can be critical. Digital cameras and video storytelling can provide compelling visuals that put a human face on a problem. In addition to including photos and video streaming on a web site for anyone to see, pictures can be inserted into reports to elected officials or plastered on posters. Video footage of young people talking about a specific issue can be edited down to a succinct “video postcard” or series of “video testimonials,” a smart substitute if students cannot travel to appear in person before the legislative committee. These videotapes can be duplicated for very little cost and be distributed to key decision-makers, media outlets, and funders. (Refer to “Create A Video Testimonial Handout” in the Appendix.)

It is safe to assume that many imaginative technological applications will be forthcoming and many will be developed by today’s young community activists, but don’t discard the phone and mail yet!

To what extent can young people plan and run an advocacy conference?

Young people should participate in all decisions from conference atmospherics to substantive content. Those with experience are ideally suited to facilitate plenary sessions and workshops. Major events such as a conference make it unrealistic and inadvisable to depend on volunteers to attend to the overwhelming array of logistical details. However, if there are some youths with the skills, time, and the desire to work intensely, paid part-time staff positions with well-defined responsibilities can make a tremendous difference and avoid the likelihood of adults taking over the planning process.

Be clear from the beginning what aspects of the agenda are set in stone, or any funding requirements or parameters. Resist making decisions such as selecting a keynote speaker without first consulting with the planning committee. Here is a checklist that suggests the breadth of youth involvement:

- consider the budget implications of every aspect of the conference;
- determine conference objectives and overall flow of the event;
- create a title that reflects the theme ("Youth Summit on HIV Prevention," "Building Hope: Solutions to Youth-on-Youth Violence," etc.);
- choose theme music for the opening and closing of the conference, some hit single that reinforces the message of empowerment. One classic that works well with lots of audiences is "Get Up! Stand Up!" by the late Reggae singer, Bob Marley;
- brainstorm various icebreaker and energizer activities;
- decide which individuals or school groups could lead icebreaker or energizers;
- consider which workshops might be most worthwhile;
- select who might run or co-facilitate other workshops;
- develop certain workshops and rehearse before planning committee;
- review handouts and other materials for participants;
- preview and determine which videos, PowerPoint presentations, or slides to show; explore possible VIP speakers to invite (city council member, community leader, police chief, school superintendent, celebrity, etc.);
- select several young activists to speak at the conference;
- decide which youth conference planners might introduce speakers, videos, and other parts of the program;

- create slogan and/or graphics for buttons, T-shirts, posters, etc. that each conference participant would receive;
- design name tags and consider markings on badges for breakout groups;
- advise on room setup;
- react to proposed snacks and menus;
- plan evening activities;
- decide a "code of conduct" with clear consequences for failing to abide by rules;
- define chaperone responsibilities and consider activities for them;
- discuss a possible future role for youth planning committee members to follow up with individuals, school teams, and community groups who attend the conference.

How should young activists be supported after an intensive training or retreat?

Participant reentry is crucial. It's essential to anticipate the alienation young people may feel from family or friends that can erase their excitement. School demands and competing interests can crowd out a fledgling advocacy campaign which is why it is so important to renew contact with everyone—ideally within two weeks. Whoever is planning the training or retreat should devote a significant amount of time to post-conference follow up. Also, here are a couple of ways to prepare while everyone is still together:

- Ask everyone, including adults, to identify a few individuals back at home—friends, a relative, teacher, or a religious or community leader—who might be supportive of one's advocacy efforts. Encourage each individual to contact at least one of their soul mates within one week to share details about the experience and campaign.
- Ongoing communications, even just to check in, should continue. Additional conference calls, local meetings, and friendly reminders are needed to keep everyone engaged with the issue. Momentum does not just happen on its own. Intentional follow-up should be overseen by staff (that can include youth staff) in order to make sure everyone is contacted.

In order to keep the motivation alive, it's really important to have a steady stream of meetings, activities, and opportunities to put passion into action.

Chapter V

CONFLICTS & CHALLENGES

“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.”

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

~ Albert Einstein

Challenging the status quo is a messy process. Collaborating with people of different ages from diverse backgrounds adds to the difficulty. But, in the words of Albert Einstein, when a problem arises, there is the possibility that an organization and its members will become stronger as a result of it. The difference is the degree to which an organization and the individuals invested are open, flexible, and imaginative enough to embrace the conflict or challenge.

Advocacy does not happen in a vacuum. Changes might take place within an individual, organization, or community that will have a direct impact on a short-term project or long-term initiative. Just when a campaign seems to be picking up speed, personality conflicts flare up or several activists may disagree on the best course of action. Sometimes conflict is bred out of misunderstanding and miscommunication and there are ways to avoid this kind of tension in the future. At other times, conflict is inevitable and necessary in order for the opinions and concerns of every party involved to be fully heard.

The collaborative nature of intergenerational participation must be understood in terms of a relationship: there is always work to be done and room for improvement. But if individuals and organizations are truly dedicated to the process, the work will be worth it in the end.

How can youths and adults change how they interact?

Intergenerational advocacy represents a seismic role reversal. It is altogether different from traditional programming where adults set the agenda and expect young people to do what they are told. As with any coalition, there is also the potential friction between the “pros”—seasoned professionals—and the amateurs. Group dynamics are far more complex with a mix of generations and personalities.

In our age-segregated society, roles remain entrenched. Adults are conditioned to be the authority figures and youths are accustomed to take orders. Many are compliant, while others may act defiant. Even with the best of intentions, there is a tendency to fall back into these old habits. While some interactive exercises included in the Appendix can heighten sensitivities about the generation gap, nothing can substitute for a raft of experiences shared together over weeks and months. In addition to shared efforts on a community action project, consider some other opportunities that fuel the relationship building process:

- sending birthday cards
- graduation celebrations
- office parties
- recreational outings
- communicating via e-mail and better yet Instant Messenger

Blending business with bonding cannot be stressed enough.

This transformation is neither about deferring to nor commandeering youths. It is a new mindset and delicate balancing act: adults show respect and share power with youths and younger people respect the experience, ideas, and skills of their elders. A tug of war is replaced with give and take. Trust is a major factor in this equation. There needs to be spirited support for young people to test their intuitive ideas. Similar to most adult-driven plans, mixed results and mistakes are to be expected. Adults need to be the catalyst for this gradual process of youths taking leadership roles. Providing resources, guidance, and training means these novices won't be set up to fail.

In the early stages, it is recommended not to sweat the small stuff. Adults should let youth-designed activities move forward. This sets an important precedent. It is also a good way to help the group determine how well it is functioning, perhaps reshuffle some responsibilities, and recruit for specific needs. Later on, give honest feedback and share misgivings about major decisions. It is important to select initiatives periodically that help maintain momentum and achieve incremental success.

The reminders in the following list of Do's & Don'ts may help everyone collaborate together more effectively.

REMINDERS: DON'Ts	REMINDERS: DO's
Lecture	Listen
Be close-minded	Be open-minded
Co-opt or redirect ideas	Build on ideas
Pretend to agree	Be honest and authentic
Stereotype	See everyone as individuals
Show favoritism	Show respect
Fear failure	Trust
Stifle creativity	Experiment
Be passive	Be energetic
Be judgmental	Offer a safe space
Force anyone to participate	Be flexible
Selectively share certain information	Share skills and information
Ignore personality conflicts	Engage everyone
Control everything	Provide support
Be power hungry	Curb your ego
Make half-hearted commitments	Keep your promise
Expect more from teens than adults	Hold people to their commitments
Be a hypocrite	Walk the talk
Try to be a teen	Act your age
Act uptight	Be patient and persistent
Be unreliable	Be consistent and dependable
Whine	Demonstrate your passion
Be too serious	Laugh and have fun

Are there dangers in being a close confidant or assuming a parental role?

Definitely! Keep some distance to avoid becoming a surrogate parent or therapist. If someone appears to be excluded from the group, first check to see what the individual wants. He or she may prefer not to be sitting on the couch with everyone else. Ultimately, the goal is to provide a safe, comfortable, non-judgmental environment. Strive for a more collegial relationship.

Trusting relationships should be distinct from friendships. There is a balance between being a sounding board and a confidant. Being a confidant can lead to delving into issues that someone may never have wanted to discuss. If the problem involves other members of the group, be careful not to badmouth anyone. Otherwise, it's apt to be repeated and poison the group chemistry. In addition, it is possible for an adult to be too honest and inadvertently become an adversary.

If a young person is in trouble with perhaps a family problem or medical condition, identifying trained professionals or community services is advisable. However, such referrals do not mean an adult should cease staying in contact, voicing concern, and expressing empathy. Another recommendation is not to betray confidence and discuss any personal issues with others, especially a parent or guardian, unless their son or daughter gives the okay.

Another criticism leveled at some adults is their desire for acceptance. Trying to be liked by youth participants can result in poor judgment. If this behavior is directed only at certain people, other youths may construe this as playing favorites. Also, this situation can do irreparable harm because rebuilding trust is very difficult.

As suggested earlier, it can be advantageous to separate distinct responsibilities between adult strategists involved in an advocacy campaign and grownups providing adult supervision. Chaperones need to be briefed ahead of time about what is expected of them. Like it or not, minors cannot participate in out-of-town trips and conferences without the presence of some older folks. Liability concerns need to be addressed. Furthermore, youth participants need to appreciate the involvement of chaperones and understand that these adults have to make sure everyone abides by whatever code of conduct has been agreed to, and that there will be consequences for not following the rules. Room checks at overnight conferences, especially on the last night, usually pose far greater challenges than personal issues or health problems. For those parents and other volunteers who spend considerable time with youths, consider giving these adults contact information for social services and professionals so they are in a position to make referrals without betraying confidentiality.

How can adults avoid imposing a plan of action?

“These three basic principles apply to any rising generation in non-traditional societies (like America) that allow young people some freedom to redirect society according to their own inclinations. Each generation:

- 1) solves a problem facing the prior youth generation, whose style has become dysfunctional in the new era;
- 2) corrects for the behavioral excess it perceives in the current midlife generation;
- 3) fills the social role being vacated by the departing elder generation.”

~ Neil Howe and William Strauss
MILLENNIALS RISING: The Next Great Generation

Often a group of youths is asked how they would get rid of gangs, reduce teen pregnancies, or deal with some other daunting societal problem. This invitation for out-of-the-box thinking sends a message that their ideas deserve attention. This discussion may elicit very different responses: young people might propose a novel or previously overlooked solution, support a familiar program like peer education, or seek a sweeping social justice plan.

Another alternative to this open-ended approach is to ask young people their opinions regarding solutions that are currently pending or have been debated in the past. The public policy priorities of the host organization should be introduced in a bold and forthright manner along with a smorgasbord of other proposals, including those advocated by “the other side.” The positions of the mayor, the governor, or other power brokers should be outlined. If a group is tackling alcohol use, for instance, voluntary programs by retailers or public education campaigns by the beer and liquor companies should be included on the menu. Instead of a lecture, handouts with summaries of the pros and cons, key political players, and other background information can spark a substantive group discussion. In a larger gathering, small groups could review the information, react, and share their thoughts with the larger audience. Even better, distribute these summaries in advance of a meeting to give everyone an opportunity to review it and be ready to pose questions, challenge some of the assumptions, and participate more fully. (Refer to the Appendix, “Sample Issue Analysis Worksheets.”)

The purpose of this process is to inform young activists about a variety of ideas and the political realities. Think of this process as an opportunity for adults to serve as the starter log that helps to ignite the fire. At this juncture, it’s time to sit back and wait. “Hold your tongue and just let the young people come up with the ideas,” urges one seasoned advisor. This means being patient during those moments of silence or when the group is floundering. One distinct possibility is some young people may reject pending or current public policies as mere leftovers that adults have been pursuing for years. For example, many gun control proposals may be viewed as ineffective halfway measures that fail to address the underlying societal problems. This is another reason for the emphasis on the political situation and consideration of incremental solutions.

As public awareness shifts and the political climate adjusts, other public policy initiatives should continually be considered. As long as young activists together with adults are continually given updates and remain well-informed, there is a greater likelihood the

advocacy campaign can retain its central goals and objectives, but pursue alternative paths in light of changed political realities. Obviously, a multi-pronged plan requires deciding what initiative to concentrate on first, probably based on timing (i.e., after the school board turns its attention to other matters besides debate on the annual budget; following the election of a new city council; or when the state legislature is in session).

Here are a few other general guidelines but some are definitely easier said than done:

- Offer enough information to inform the discussion but leave plenty of room for young people to reach consensus themselves.
- Avoid being too much of a participant—the primary role is to remain on the sidelines, share information, and toss out options.
- Contribute but don't dominate the discussion.
- Suggest tactics and strategies that will stimulate thoughts about new directions and approaches.
- Pose questions and encourage a variety of views and answers, followed by a discussion of pros and cons about specific ideas
- Identify possible community connections and opportunities.
- Sometimes pick up the pieces and act as the glue, providing historical context and continuity.
- Be patient and model persistence.

Integrating diverse viewpoints deepens a group's understanding of the complexity of an issue. Those engaged in this process are much more likely to be engaged in an advocacy campaign if they helped define the problem and wrestled with solutions.

In what other ways can adults “back off”?

Here are several other approaches that may help equalize youth and adult roles:

- Refresh everyone’s memory about the overarching goal of the campaign and the commitment to maximum youth involvement.
- Ask adults to wait to speak until all the youths who want to talk have spoken. This dynamic alters the societal code that young people usually wait to be called on or speak after adults have finished talking.
- Try a “no interruption” rule that says no one should interject comments or cut others off in mid-sentence. If someone cuts in, the facilitator can go back and ask the individual if he or she wants to finish the point they were making.
- Silence is golden. After information is presented, the facilitator can ask everyone to take a couple of minutes to jot down comments and reflect. This allows time for everybody to collect their thoughts. Quieter people may be more likely to share them out loud.
- Experiment with youth and adult co-chairs, especially if a young person has strong facilitation skills and is aware of group tensions and undercurrents.
- Adults withdraw and let young people brainstorm separately, and then reunite. This situation can allow a freer atmosphere and faster pace.

Evaluate everyone’s roles—youths, adults, and staff members. Some modifications are to be expected, especially as young people gain experience and can assume more responsibilities. It is possible that an advocacy campaign may change course, requiring different talents. This would be an opportune time to revisit the degree of youth infusion.

What if young activists drift away from the primary goal?

"I prefer the errors of enthusiasm to the indifference of wisdom."
~ Anatole Francis

"I keep the boat afloat while the students steer and propel us to shore."
~ County Coalition Coordinator

Diversion isn't always bad. Certain campaigns actually need some short-term activities that might appear to stray from the main campaign somewhat, to refresh the commitment to pursue more far-reaching goals. Equally important, the natural ebb and flow of advocacy work lends itself to juggling several initiatives. This is especially true when a proposal is in a dormant stage of the public policy making process, especially when other issues demand immediate action. A case in point: Coleman Advocates' Youth Making A Change put on hold its ambitious agenda to win funding for mental health counselors in every San Francisco high school to concentrate on attempting to defeat a California ballot proposition pertaining to juvenile justice. Nonetheless, both the ballot question and school proposal were adopted.

On the other hand, certain projects cannot be relegated to the back burner. It might mean the loss of a grant or jeopardize future funding. The host organization's board of directors may be demanding results. Jobs may be on the line. If these pressures exist, it is crucial that the youth collaborators are fully briefed on the situation. If there is dissension about whether to carry on with the original campaign, expect that several people may leave, perhaps to work on other issues that the group cannot focus on. This, too, is an inevitable part of community organizing.

If no ideas have captivated interest and gained consensus, consider getting group members to canvas schools and youth hangouts to ask opinions about programs, services, current laws, etc. This information, even an informal survey, can help jumpstart the group. Also, this community outreach can attract new talent to the group.

What techniques help build consensus rather than division?

Disagreements can surface during discussions about a course of action or tactics. Voting, even by secret ballot, is quick and decisive but carries significant risks. It can be divisive. Those with ideas that are trounced upon may be disheartened and drop out.

More deliberative group conversations about ranking, prioritizing, or melding several ideas together can decrease or eliminate the winners and losers syndrome. Another advantage is to reduce the dominance of those who tend to be more assertive and opinionated. The following are some examples of techniques that might be useful in bringing the group back together:

- Consider combining ideas that are similar. Then the most popular proposals can be discussed by everyone, followed by a vote to determine the top one or two projects the group wants to pursue. A discussion about money, deadlines, ways to piggyback a project to a forthcoming event, may make it obvious which idea makes sense for the short-run. Other proposed activities can be put in the "Idea Bank" until such a point when resources and timing are more favorable.
- An alternative to taking votes on various ideas is to compile a menu with the top five, ten, or dozen proposals. Then each person draws up a list, giving a "1" to their top choice, "2" to the next favorite idea, etc. Tally all the votes to see whether there are several dominant ideas. If not, take those proposals that received the most of votes and have everyone vote only for the two ideas they like the most.
- Discuss various ideas in small clusters, ideally splitting up close friends. Then each cluster can share its opinions with the entire group and see what patterns of consensus emerge. Alternatively, a subcommittee or task force can be created to study competing issues and make recommendations at the next meeting.
- Consensus can be based on veto power of any one individual member. If someone really cannot live with a decision, see if there is a way to respect that individual's opinion and find another approach.

Whatever the process, the emphasis should be to provide opportunities for everyone to express their views and participate as fully as they choose. The goal is that no one feels as though they are shut out of the discussion and that the process allows ideas to be refined, reworded, restructured, and perhaps merged with other proposals.

Hasty consensus without full debate can backfire. Whatever was agreed upon may unravel. This is apt to happen more with a group of youths who may not speak up during a meeting with adults present but may express opinions afterwards with their peers. It can help to take a break before decisions are made to allow for these discussions to occur and then be shared with the entire group.

What can be done about dysfunctional meetings?

“Being with a group of dedicated people inspires me for weeks afterward to take action in my community on behalf of the environment. Best of all, when I leave these meetings, I take with me a strong sense of accomplishment.”

~Member of Earth Force Youth Advisory Board

Meetings should be invigorating rather than exhausting. Generally speaking, young people have a lower threshold for discussions that drag on. Adults feel the same way but are conditioned to tolerate interminable meetings with less action-oriented output. Calling a meeting a “working party” may be an overstatement but there should be a social dimension. (Actually, most adult meetings would do well to incorporate this approach.)

Irregular attendance can cause a group to feel like it is spinning its wheels. Issues and strategies that have been discussed already may have to be reviewed for the benefit of updating those who missed the last meeting. Prior decisions get revisited. If absences seem to be a primary reason for dysfunctional meetings, evaluate whether the time of day or the location may be the cause. Transportation can be a huge barrier. In one such example, a group contracted a local taxi company because youths from several surrounding towns found it impossible to make the biweekly planning meetings. Also, look for deeper explanations for low turnout. Are young people outnumbered by adults? Do youths feel subordinate? Are factions causing tensions? What has the group accomplished so far? Until these questions are answered, don't give up on absentees and make sure they get frequent updates.

Here are some additional suggestions for avoiding unproductive and frustrating meetings:

- Catch-up and plain old hangout time help nourish friendships and group solidarity. A round of intros and/or silly energizers may encourage collegiality and also make newcomers feel less like outsiders.
- Brainstorming and planning can be followed up at the same meeting by concrete hands-on work (designing an announcement, drafting a letter, sending out e-mails, etc.). A meeting place with access to computers, printers, perhaps video equipment, and other supplies makes this possible.
- Food is important, regardless of what time of day or night meetings are held.
- Keep the fun factor present; instead of completing an action plan chart that resembles a worksheet for a class assignment, the entire group can plan an event where everyone writes down specific tasks on index cards or Post-Its. The duplicates are combined or discarded and the rest of the cards are arranged in the proper sequence. The next step is to figure out who will do what.

- Have everyone recap what he or she promises to do and decide on the date for the next meeting. Provide everyone with a one-month calendar to help keep track of upcoming dates.
- Set up telephone trees or a listserv to send out reminders and updates.
- Address persistent lack of follow through. If individuals repeatedly fail to do what they agreed to, it may be necessary to have a candid discussion about who else has the time and is qualified to undertake specific roles.

Inevitably cliques and interpersonal conflicts will crop up as they do in any group. Some of the techniques outlined below may promote good group interaction if they are introduced early on, before habits and roles take root.

- Consider co-chairs or rotate who leads the meetings and make sure the ground rules are followed by everyone. Bear in mind that most people of all ages are inexperienced in this role and need some coaching on group facilitation.
- Seek input on setting the agenda and distribute all handouts to everyone.
- Listen to others, even if you disagree. Try to build on other people's ideas.
- Have an open mind, sense of humor, and commitment to the team.
- Show respect for age, gender, culture, and class differences.
- Encourage friendly disagreement but ban any personal attacks (including rolling eyes and other subtle body language).
- Own feelings, not opinions. Regard it as flattery when others embrace your idea, but fail to give you the proper credit.
- Praise first, then propose alternatives or provide collective criticism. During brainstorming sessions, everyone can be invited to contribute one idea.
- No new subject should be brought up until everyone who wants to say something has a chance to comment. However, agree on how much time should be spent on different agenda items and then get someone to keep track of time.
- Consider designating a limited amount of time to let people air their grievances.
- Ask someone to monitor "interrupters," especially more outspoken folks who jump in often, which can cause other folks to withdraw from the discussion.

- Choose a “jargon buster” whose role it is to translate acronyms, technical terms, and perhaps expressions that not everyone understands. Provide the individual with a noisemaker to momentarily halt discussion and give explanations.
- Encourage active involvement in one aspect of the campaign. Don't create work but give everyone responsibility for tasks that are real and necessary!
- Evaluate the decision-making process and try different approaches to running meetings. When youths and adults all work together, sometimes it can be more productive for young activists to caucus separately and then report their recommendations to the adults.
- Celebrate and celebrate often. Once a task is completed, relish in the progress.

Apart from group discussions and meetings, make sure there is adequate time for small breakouts or subcommittee strategizing, along with plenty of opportunities to socialize. Young people won't stay involved if the process is not personally rewarding and fun.

How can personality clashes and power struggles be minimized?

Combustible group chemistry is inevitable. The mix of ages produces an inherent conflict: young people want adult support, attention, and respect but also are poised to challenge adult assumptions. Egos have a polarizing effect; slightly older youths who get a taste of authority may intimidate or exert a shift in the balance of power in "adultist" ways. Unique personalities add to the complexity. For these reasons, it is advisable not to concentrate the power in the hands of a couple of people but to strive for group-centered leadership. The emphasis is not about the individual, but what "we" do or the familiar mantra—working as a T.E.A.M. —Together Everyone Achieves More!

In some situations, the entire group might benefit from being trained in facilitation techniques, especially if these skills would be helpful when running workshops, forums, and other interactive activities. These same skills then can be applied in the group's own meetings. Some organizations use a behavior contract that includes being prompt and reliable, being drug-free, etc. Another area of training is feedback skills that teach group members how to share and absorb information or even how to control one's anger. As mentioned earlier, team building activities also build group solidarity.

A few suggestions are outlined here for responding to some typical personality challenges, including handling difficult individuals who range from non-communicative to obnoxious:

- **SILENT** - Don't single out the quiet individual publicly. Offer genuine praise but not in a way that can be embarrassing or draw too much attention to the individual. Perhaps suggest he or she brings along a friend to the next meeting.
- **RESERVED** - Ask about opinions or experiences of their friends so it is less personal. Don't demand commitment in the beginning because it may scare away the individual.
- **TONGUE-TIED** - Paraphrase what an individual is trying to convey and then ask if this is what she or he has in mind. Perhaps ask if someone can build on the idea(s) just presented.
- **NONSTOP TALKER** - Thank him or her for comments and ask for other thoughts, emphasizing that it would be great to hear from everyone.
- **RESTLESS** - Try to get the individual to voice views and perhaps invite her or him to lead discussion.
- **NAYSAYER** - Discuss privately, perhaps outside the meeting, to see if the negative vibes pertain to the advocacy campaign or to something else.

- **NEWCOMER** - Welcome a new face and encourage his/her participation but also explain that decisions have been made at previous meetings and planning is well underway. As soon as the group begins to discuss the next course of action, that's the time for full-fledged input from this individual.
- **UNFOCUSED** - Avoid dampening good ideas but also prevent he or she from derailing the discussion. Perhaps ask "How about if we come back to that topic later on?"
- **INTERRUPTER** - Toss out the comment to the entire group with a question, "Are there some other opinions?" or "How do the rest of you feel about what's been said?"
- **STUBBORN** - Explain that to continue the debate on a particular point is going to take up too much time. Perhaps say, "I respect your right to a strong opinion, but under the circumstances, I'll have to ask you to go along with the group."
- **CLOWN** - Express the importance of humor and suggest that some levity will be needed later on, perhaps vaguely alluding to a future phase in the campaign.

A non-judgmental response for many circumstances can be, "What do the rest of you think about that?" Another way to handle ideas and comments is to write "Parking Lot" on a big sheet of paper taped to the wall where thoughts or grievances are posted and get discussed later.

How do adults deal with a looming deadline and not take over?

Procrastination is particularly vexing when dealing with volunteers because it is impossible to demand accountability. Some folks (of all ages) simply forget to do what they promised. Others volunteer to do something and have a change of heart. Also, students have little control over their schedule and, for instance, a parent may not like their daughter participate in activities on weekdays. Consequently, important tasks may not get done which could mean missing a deadline to submit a grant application, not contacting legislators prior to a crucial vote, or waiting until the next day to call back a newspaper reporter.

It is entirely understandable why adults jump in at the eleventh hour and take over, especially if their job is in jeopardy. However, this reaction can set bad precedent. The message to youths: "we'll have to do this without you" or "we cannot depend on you." Unless it is a question of major significance, try to work through an urgent situation with the youths involved as best as possible and take time to reflect together on how such lost opportunities or mix-ups could be avoided in the future.

Devising a system that anticipates scheduling conflicts and absentmindedness can help. Regular communication helps determine each individual's preferences. Is the response better when using e-mail, Instant Messenger, phone or mail? A case in point: a student speaker at a news conference was handed a speech to read because no system was in place for prior consultation. Her reaction was "It made me feel that I was incapable of writing a speech."

Preparing for unforeseen problems is essential. Someone may volunteer to do something but then get sick, have a conflict, or just back out. Instead of taking your chances, explore having another youth agree to cover if necessary. This backup person can also be responsible for checking to make sure the lead person is getting the job done.

Beware of asking "Who can volunteer to do...?" Usually the same people will step up to the plate because no one else is. A less coercive question is "Does anyone have the time and interest to work on this?" Especially with major events such as planning a rally, it is unrealistic and unfair to expect youths to volunteer regularly after school and on the weekends to make it happen. This is the type of situation where temporary paid part-time positions with defined job responsibilities reduce the likelihood of adults taking over a youth-driven project.

Frequent contact between staff members, adults, and youths cannot be underestimated. In one example, a paid college undergraduate helped coordinate an advocacy campaign and attributes part of the success to inexpensive internal communications. After a training, he followed up on the phone with four supportive telephone calls and reached 70% of the interested youths at least once. He sent five newsletters to students and two to parents. This low-tech approach helped maintain individual commitment to the cause and overall group cohesion. Leaving a voice mail message, sending handwritten notes, birthday cards, and other personal gestures can go a long way toward healthy collaboration.

How can we avoid having adults feel excluded?

Much of the nitty-gritty work falls to adults. Behind-the-scenes support is essential for any group, especially since the school day limits students' ability to attend daytime meetings, make or receive phone calls, network with other advocacy groups, gather intelligence about pending legislation, etc. Many of these duties performed by adults go unnoticed, particularly if everything seems to happen effortlessly. It's helpful for the young people involved with a campaign to be made aware of, for example, how much time a staff person or adult volunteer spent getting posters printed or food donated for meetings. Adult collaborators also need to keep their colleagues in the loop. Briefing the staff and providing substantive updates help win respect and avoid demoralizing comments. Adults need to be nourished and appreciated just like everybody else.

In certain campaigns, the transition from adult-directed to youth-led advocacy may revive age segregation. As young people move into the driver's seat, adults sometimes find themselves unwelcome. "Anyone over 25 should leave" is stated blatantly. Some adults understand and expect this independence, trusting an intergenerational alliance will result in due time. Others will be hurt irreparably, especially those who have been involved in a cause for years.

If such a problem of exclusion can be confronted, the outcome can be a healthy group where no one—regardless of age—dominates, and everyone operates on a more equal footing. There is no question, though, that adults will be displaced as more positions are filled by young people. The YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT believes this should happen. Already at many youth-serving organizations, this change is well underway and adults still share meaningful roles alongside much younger colleagues.

What happens if the host organization is at odds with a youth initiative?

This unfortunate situation occurs more often than one might think. Young activists or an intergenerational team are told to take the ball and run, just as long as they tow the line. But if the consensus is to concentrate on another issue that doesn't track with organization's priorities, watch out. Conflict also can erupt over tactics such as demonstrating in front of the mayor's home, which has the potential to jeopardize the organization's image and relationship with city leaders.

With close ties to senior level staff, ongoing consultation should reduce the likelihood of deadlock over the direction of one aspect of a multi-faceted advocacy campaign. In some circumstances, it will be necessary to attempt to get the green light from the board of directors, coalition executive committee, or agency head. This lengthy approval process that can take months can effectively stop a youth initiative dead in its tracks. And, a veto from higher ups can cause a core group of youths and adults to defect to form their own independent campaign. It will be an uphill battle to reconstitute an intergenerational team with those who remain with the host organization.

In most community change efforts, there is a smattering of approaches and disunity. But it is worth remembering that most movements need more extreme positions to move the center.

How do we handle defeat and regain momentum?

“We had opposition by our own community, our friends’ parents and our friends’ older brothers and sisters. Once you get past that, it doesn’t faze you. We got totally shutdown and we came back to the statehouse knowing exactly what we did wrong and we were 100% more efficient. What sticks out in my mind, and still does, is the testifying that we did. Our age was probably a factor against us but we still went up and we said what was on our minds without thinking about how other people were going to react to it.”

~ 8th grader who helped win passage of the landmark
Massachusetts Tobacco Free Schools Law

Inaction is more common than outright defeat. For example, a superintendent appoints a task force to study a problem or a bill remains stuck in a committee for months. Even though it is impossible to predict outcomes, it is important to prepare for disappointment. Community change initiatives often lose out to proposals pushed by powerful and/or well-organized influential interests that enjoy close ties with key decision-makers and their aides.

Defeat may strengthen resolve. Opposition, unlike apathy, tends to be a catalyst. The challenge is to achieve what political strategists term “intensity” in order to keep the cause alive. One student-led campaign captured the interest of a feature writer at the city newspaper who did a series of articles on their efforts. This media coverage put pressure on the committee chair to have a vote on a bill. A fresh launch might consist of a press conference releasing survey results or other newsworthy information. Even a letter to the editor in the weekly community paper can get the ball rolling again. The formation of a speaker’s bureau that makes presentations throughout the community can rev up the engine by increasing awareness and attracting new support. From there, more opportunities are apt to surface.

If you look upon your campaign as an evolving adventure, you will be more likely to constantly try new tactics and reshape your game plan. Consider three key elements:

- **TIMING** - Comedians know timing is crucial and the same holds true for activists. You may realize now that your proposal cannot be considered for a couple of months, until the school board meets or because the state legislature is not in session. Does it make sense to continue to build public support or would it be wiser to direct your energy to a different short-term goal? Another possibility is to put aside your top concern and speak out on related issues that are actively being debated and in the news.
- **FRAMING** - It might make sense to change how you have been presenting or “framing” your plan. Sometimes it may be smarter to avoid controversy and

remain low-key so as not to stir up the opposition. In other cases, the opposite may be true. A proposal may not get the attention it deserves because it doesn't seem new and different, so the challenge will be to make your initiative stand out. Constantly rethink your message and sound bite. When reconsidering how to present your plan, never misrepresent or distort information.

- **MOBILIZING** - Are there enough people and diverse organizations on your side? Is it necessary to continue to drum up more support? Are you targeting the right audience(s)? Do you have a sponsor or champion for your cause who is influential enough with other decision-makers?

Another approach is to examine other solutions or incremental steps to addressing a particular problem. This strategy has the advantage of approaching additional community groups, mobilizing new folks, and dealing with some decision-makers previously not involved. A different plan of action holds the promise of a new game with the added benefit that the team is now more experienced as advocates.

Like any ADVENTURE,

you are bound to experience ups and downs.

Remember CHANGE takes time and rarely happens quickly.

You will run up against a powerful well-funded OPPOSITION.

LEARN from setbacks and defeat.

Expect challenges and consider new STRATEGIES!

Don't give up - be PERSISTENT.

CELEBRATE victories both big and small.

How do we evaluate our intergenerational advocacy efforts?

Frequent health checks are a good idea. Typically it takes two or three years for a group to evolve to where youth and adult roles peacefully coexist. And, of course, continuity is not guaranteed due to natural attrition and staff turnover, uncertain funding, and the unpredictability of advocacy efforts.

Be honest about what's working and what is not. There are bound to be creative tensions caused by philosophical differences and personality conflicts. Adult collaborators might consider keeping a journal for a week on formal and informal conversations with individuals and group interactions. Evaluate what you did as an adult, how individual youths responded, what happened next, and what you might do differently next time. It can be helpful to share these observations with a colleague or that all-important soul mate.

Assess what roles and responsibilities assumed by youths used to be done by adults. Don't be bashful about asking the young activists how they feel about their involvement. Encourage candid discussions that address such challenges as:

- Does the organization, including senior level staff, seem committed to maximum youth involvement?
- Does everyone feel they get the respect they deserve?
- Is there adequate funding to provide resources and ongoing training?
- What changes should be made so the group works better together?
- What progress has been made in mobilizing community support?
- What community impact has been achieved up to this point?
- What aspect of this advocacy effort are we most excited about?
- How have we made a difference?
- And...are we having fun?

Co-equal collaboration between a diverse group of youths and a diverse group of adults is only in its formative stage of development. Much is being learned every day about how to engage in intergenerational advocacy to bring about lasting community change.

SUCCESS STORIES

True stories can spur youths and adults to believe in their combined power to bring about lasting community change. Specific campaigns can be selected on the basis of the issue, tactics, geography, age (from pre-teens to older adolescents). These examples can serve as a catalyst for brainstorming solutions as well as discussing effective advocacy strategies. Some of these initiatives are highlighted in our "Influential Young Advocates" video and others are incorporated in the "Youth! The 26% Solution" action handbook. Our national clearinghouse's web site (www.YouthActivismProject.org) organizes these and dozens more stories by topic.

Collective Action Produces Results

Adriann Buckles from the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Poplar, Montana, was sick of the unappetizing cafeteria food and alarmed by the rise in Type 2 diabetes. After two years of voicing concerns, her classmates, several teachers and influential community members expressed support. She organized a boycott of the school lunch by getting a local grocery store to donate bread and a student council contribution that made it possible to provide sandwiches to students three days in a row. The campaign succeeded in getting new menus along with an extensive salad bar. This 10th grader now is the lead consultant to the head cook at her school and has been a speaker at several national conferences sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Her father credits Adriann's involvement in nutrition advocacy with helping him shed extra pounds.

VIPs Partner Effectively with Young Advocates

Young people with firsthand experience in the foster care system played an active role in with the Governor of Massachusetts and the Youth Development Advisory Council in drafting a bill to provide free tuition to current and former foster children at any one of 29 state and community colleges and universities. These young advocates lobbied key decision-makers, testified before the Board of Higher Education, and implemented a media campaign that resulted in making this idea a reality.

Adult Response at the First Sign of Interest Pays Off

A strong Clean Indoor Air bill in Utah had been defeated three years in a row by the tourism and hospitality industry but the unique clout of young activists changed the course of history. After a high school club in Provo heard a health educator speak about a tobacco bill that was going to be reintroduced in the next legislative session, they told their club advisor they wanted to get involved. Within a few days, a legislative intern traveled from the state capitol to meet with the students. A partnership was immediately hatched between interested students and a "youth-friendly" State Department of Health employee. From this one school-based group, a plan developed to mobilize numerous schools and youth organizations across Utah. Months later, 1500 students converged for a rally in the Statehouse Rotunda and made the rounds from office to office, handing out air fresheners with the message "We Want Clean Air." The bill passed by a landslide vote. (Watch YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT'S "Influential Young Advocates" video.)

Intergenerational Collaboration Shows Its Political Muscle

During the ballot initiative in San Francisco to renew the Children's Fund that requires the city to set aside about \$23 million of property tax revenues each year, youths spoke about the effectiveness of this charter amendment. Rather than hearing from adult supporters, an umbrella organization called Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth arranged for teens to give firsthand accounts to the Chamber of Commerce and many other influential groups. Their experiences about the benefits of the Eco-Center, the Mayor's Youth Education and Employment Program, and 180 other programs supported by the Children's Fund helped convince voters to reauthorize this ballot initiative that earmarks 2.5% of city revenues for community youth development.

Information = Power

Sixth grade students in Charleston, South Carolina embarked on a five-month survey of the 10-square block area around their school. They photographed 45 abandoned lots and dilapidated buildings and drew up a survey asking 50 residents for their recommendations. The students presented their findings to the City Council. The City of Charleston released a report entitled "Neighborhood Revitalization Plan," which instructs the City staff to communicate with the students to monitor progress. The Mayor commented, "I have been extremely impressed with the dedication of Earth Force students. The students have been as well prepared to address an issue as any citizens I have encountered in my 25 years in office." In March 2001, students and city planners hosted a "charrette" where community members met to discuss next steps.

Quietest Student Breaks Coalition Deadlock

A task force attracted an impressive group of public health and education representations along with some community leaders. Month after month, a consensus eluded the group on how to solve the largely ignored problem of tobacco use by students and staff on school grounds - a violation of county, state, and federal regulations. The quietest member of the task force and a reporter for her high school newspaper ended up breaking the logjam. She suggested inviting every high school newspaper to investigate the scope of illegal tobacco use on campus and present the findings at a countywide news conference. Two months later, over a dozen high schools documented widespread smoking and offered a range of proposals. This event spurred the coalition to follow up with the School Board. The Superintendent issued strong reporting requirements on compliance and also encouraged teen cessation programs.

School Administrator Teams Up with Students

Students at King City High School in California wanted the vending machines to offer other snacks besides chips and candy bars. The group joined up with the vice principal and the snack company to find low-fat foods that could be sold. Then they conducted a taste-test on campus so the entire student body could vote on which snacks they preferred. As a result, vending machines at this school now are filled with pretzels, low-fat cereal bars and other healthier snacks.

Comparing Nearby Communities Produces Compelling Contrasts

Seventh graders in Dallas, Texas surveyed their neighborhood block by block and decided one problem they wanted to tackle was to reduce the number of liquor stores, especially near their schools. They videotaped their community and then went to other areas. They found very few liquor stores in the suburbs, and none near schools. Students arranged to meet with local decision-makers that included the Zoning Commission. They discovered that their state legislature had the authority to determine the location and number of liquor stores, so they traveled to the State Capitol to present their evidence. Senator West, a strong supporter, declared, "The children motivated me. I'm going to do all I can to help get the bill passed." The state law was changed to allow city officials to impose a moratorium on liquor stores in Dallas.

Youth Insights Taken Seriously by Powers-That-Be

The Board of Young Adult Police Commissioners of New Haven, Connecticut is composed of 22 high school students and advises key decision-makers on numerous policy issues. When the City Council was considering a blanket curfew for all teenagers, the Board persuaded the Aldermen to adopt an alternative program modeled after Boston that targets only the small percentage of minors who are on probation and have a history of criminal behavior. More recently, the School Superintendent proposed installing metal detectors in all high schools and several middle schools. The Board held meetings and obtained thousands of signatures on a petition, involving parents in these discussions.

Research Prompts District-wide Policy Change

Young Oakland United (YOU) of People United for a Better Oakland, issued a report called Lock Down that revealed that the high school suspension rate had increased over 60% during the past five years, and less than 3% of these suspensions were for violent offenses. YOU also documented that parents were deliberately kept in the dark. This analysis prompted the Oakland Unified School District to form an Education Task Force. The result was a new policy requiring pre-suspension documentation and that all suspension notices must be written in the native language of the family.

Controversy Is Catalyst for Increased Communication

In the small town of Goshen, New York, a student learned of a study that found school-based condom availability programs can increase use by as much as 35%, without significantly increasing the number of teens actually having sex. This 17-year-old launched her own campaign and got shuttled back and forth between her principal and the school board. Frustrated by the runaround, she organized a public forum that drew nearly 250 teachers, parents, and other community members for a three-hour panel discussion about safe sex, condoms, and the reality of teens' lives in Goshen. Instead the forum provided a welcoming space for open discussions on these taboo subjects. Although the school board refused to distribute condoms, the lines of communication opened up about safe sex in this small community.

Making Demands to the Right Public Officials

Students at the Immaculate Conception Academy located in the Mission District in San Francisco, California, wanted more video surveillance cameras on Muni buses to improve rider safety. They held a school assembly that attracted such bigwigs as Mayor Willie Brown, several state legislators and Muni's director of security. Elected officials made promises to win the support of the Board of Supervisors and find the funds to implement the students' proposal. This successful campaign was part of the San Francisco Organizing Project, a grassroots federation of 40 churches and three schools. After a two-year pilot program using cameras on the 14-Mission line, crime dropped by 80 percent, compared with that of the entire line.

Visually Powerful Petition Drive

Girls and Guys Against Gun Violence from Miami decided to travel to the nation's capitol to demonstrate their support for common sense gun proposals. This group created giant paper doll petitions. The high school students determined that each paper doll represents nine young Americans who die from gun violence every day. On the steps of the U.S. Congress, a special paper doll was presented to Congresswoman Carrie Meeks (D-FL) for her support of gun control legislation. This youth-led organization, affiliated with the Miami Urban Ministries of the United Methodist Church, received a mini-grant from the Alliance for Justice's Co/Motion program. (Watch YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT's "Influential Young Advocates" video about Co/Motion's Atlanta Youth on Track.)

Young Minds Generate Cost Saving Solution

A local newspaper article about sludge prompted Bellamy Middle School students in Chicopee, Massachusetts to get involved. Air quality regulations brought a halt to the burning of liquid wastes from factories and public buildings, as well as sewage from homes. Hauling the sludge to the landfill was no longer an option because it was frozen solid. City officials proposed constructing a costly brick building around the sludge to keep it warm through the winter. The students suggested a temporary solar greenhouse at a cost of only \$500. Their idea proved to be so effective that it became the permanent solution.

Expert Guidance Reduces School Transportation Budget

The Anne Arundel County School Board in Maryland has paid serious attention to the advice of its student representative, each of whom has enjoyed full voting rights on all school policies, including contentious budget issues, since 1975. According to the special assistant to the superintendent, one proposal by the student school board member regarding the bus schedule during high school mid-term and final exams resulted in the 39th largest school district saving \$100,000 annually. Students also serve on every advisory, curriculum, and study committee that makes recommendations to the Board of Education, and typically two students sit on each School Improvement Team.

Teens Motivate County Council More Than Doctors

For some time, doctors and hospitals had been lobbying hard for bike safety helmets. The very first law in the country requiring those under age 16 to wear helmets can be traced to a group of young students in rural Maryland. After a classmate was killed while biking, most of the 8th graders were determined that his death not be in vain. They did research, wrote letters to the editor at weekly and city newspapers, testified and mobilized community support. The opposition was fierce but the second time the students appeared before the County Council, their arguments were taken seriously and heeded.

Unorthodox Tactics Get Results

High school sophomore Cassie Fuller and two of her classmates were upset that there was no place to hang out in Sumter. This South Carolina city is positioned as a main drug traffic route for the East Coast and Cassie had experienced substance abuse problems in the past and had tried to commit suicide. Her group wanted to transform an old building into a teen center but the town denied there was a problem and didn't listen to them. Being in the state capitol, Cassie called the operator and got the main number for the Governor. This cold call led to a senior staff aide who paid attention. The Governor's office pressured local politicians to support the youths. Months later, the City Council went back on its promise to pay the salary for the director of the teen center. The group mobilized their friends, parents, and neighbors to call City Council members at their homes at night. That telephone tree won the necessary support to fund New Horizons, a center run by teens for teens. This center provides such programs as alcohol and drug-free dances, health counseling, and job assistance.

Firsthand Evidence Proves Persuasive at Statehouse

Testimony by young people based on traumatic experiences of discrimination convinced wary Massachusetts legislators to pass a landmark Gay and Lesbian Student Rights Law. Students spoke at hearings sponsored by the Lt. Governor. In close coordination with the sponsor of the legislation and advocacy organizations, students held rallies, participated in candlelight vigils, and organized letter writing campaigns. Students also managed to walk in without appointments and talk with the Speaker of the House and other powerful lawmakers. Unconventional methods gave these young lobbyists the kind of access that only hired guns usually enjoy. (Watch YOUTH ACTIVISM PROJECT's "Influential Young Advocates" video.)

Local Victory Helps Fight State Preemption Bill

In a small Minnesota community, fifth graders succeeded at getting an ordinance passed that banned cigarette vending machines. Tobacco lobbyists pursued a common industry strategy to attempt to get a bill passed by the state legislature to overturn such local laws. The students testified at committee hearings and shamed lawmakers into rebuffing the arm twisting by tobacco and vending machine company representatives. The so-called "preemption proposal" was defeated. Their social studies teacher declared this advocacy project as "One of the most exciting times in my 27 years of teaching!"

Ultimate Connections

A high school junior in Olympia, Washington was on a car trip with her sister and thought: "If you're 16 and driving, you are taking on the risk of a car crash. So why can't you be an organ donor?" She discovered that organ donors must be at least 18 years old and proposed amending the law to allow anyone over age 15 to have an organ donor designation on their driver's license, with consent by a parent or guardian. She succeeded at moving her proposal through the YMCA Youth In Government. The Governor, who participated in this mock legislature when he was a student, heard about her idea and held a press conference with this young activist. The result: the law was amended to increase the number of people who can be potential organ donors.

Successful Targeted Letter Writing Campaign

Melissa Robbins was about 8 she learned the alphabet but it was during 10th grade that she launched a campaign to make American Sign Language (ASL) acceptable a foreign language graduation requirement. Her research led her to a website listing 32 states that offered credit for ASL. Her high school newspaper rebuffed her article but her e-mail pitching the idea to the *Washington Post* met with approval. A second article got published in another major daily newspaper. Robbins then wrote the first of about a dozen letters to her local school board and superintendent arguing that ASL was a legitimate foreign language with its own culture, customs, grammar and syntax. The response was the state had to decide. Undeterred she wrote to the state board of education and also to the Chancellor at the University of Maryland. She consistently sent follow up letters. Even after she graduated from high school, she continued to push for this change. The University Board of Regents agreed and the County Public School Board agreed to develop an advanced ASL course.

Major Funding Rather Than Mini-Grants Produce Results

In California, the Nutrition Services Division of the Department of Education offered up to \$250,000 to middle schools and high schools. This state program called LEAF (Linking Education, Activity and Food), was a huge boost to Venice High School students who have been pushing for several years to make pure juice drinks available in vending machines. They testified before the L.A. Board of Education for a ban on soda sales during school hours. Their arguments were heard and the nation's second-largest school district adopted this policy.

Powerful Combination of Persistence and Unlikely Allies

Pelican Island Elementary School students in Florida were determined to protect the scrub jay, an endangered species that is so friendly the bird will eat a peanut from an open hand. Ignoring the monumental difficulty of buying the land to preserve the wildlife habitat, 4th and 5th graders first persuaded their parents to care. One girl's mother, a realtor initially suggested "scrub jay soup," but then became convinced. Numerous presentations by students, parents, and environmental groups were made to the School Board, the Indian River County Commission, their congressman, and the Secretary of the U.S. Interior Department. Ultimately, the Eco-Troop received a matching grant of more than \$200,000 from the Fish & Wildlife Service and the real estate agent played a key role in persuading private owners to sell their land for inclusion in this wildlife sanctuary.

SAMPLE ANONYMOUS SURVEY

NOTE: This short questionnaire can be adapted for your organization to assess current attitudes about the concept of youth infusion.

Young people have unique perspectives and knowledge that would enhance our organization's capacity and advocacy efforts.

1	2	3
Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Agree

Our organization should invest more resources to collaborate with young people.

1	2	3
Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Agree

Young people are reliable and should be trusted.

1	2	3
Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Agree

Young people should have the opportunity to apply for paid positions in our organization.

1	2	3
Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Agree

Our organization should adjust certain meeting times to accommodate student schedules.

1	2	3
Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Agree

Staff throughout the organization should be involved with youth infusion.

1	2	3
Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Agree

Even if young people are only involved with our organization only for the short-term, it is an important component of our mission and advocacy work.

1	2	3
Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Agree

Other comments:

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE: YOUTH ROLES

NOTE: The following questionnaire helps determine whether adults and youths view certain responsibilities as off-limits, at least at this stage. This checklist can be a catalyst for discussion about possible conflicts over the extent of youth involvement and also help prioritize training needs.

NAME (optional)

Make a check (✓) in one of the columns and also note if you could help train others.

Please add any other roles to this questionnaire.

POTENTIAL YOUTH ROLES	RED LIGHT No	YELLOW LIGHT Maybe	GREEN LIGHT Yes	✓ Yes, I could help!
Recruit youths				
Recruit adults				
Run meetings				
Facilitate discussion				
Help resolve conflicts				
Devise action plan				
Participate in long-term strategic planning				
Develop a budget				
Help write a grant				
Meet potential funders				
Apply for paid position				
Hire and evaluate staff				
Create a survey				
Canvas door-to-door				
Research an issue				
Speak to a youth group				
Set up a phone tree				

POTENTIAL YOUTH ROLES	RED LIGHT No	YELLOW LIGHT Maybe	GREEN LIGHT Yes	✓ Yes, I could help!
Create flyer/poster				
Write an article or letter to the editor				
Design a website				
Start a list serve				
Photograph or videotape				
Perform (improv, rap, street theater, etc.)				
Lead a workshop				
Plan a youth summit				
Speak at a conference				
Organize a town forum				
Draft a press release				
Call news media outlets				
Be interviewed by reporters				
Contact legislators				
Arrange a meeting with decision-makers				
Meet with legislators or their staff				
Testify at a hearing				
Help plan a rally				
Engage in sit-in or other non-violent protest				
Invite speakers, celebrities, VIPs				
Serve as a member on the Board of Directors				

SAMPLE SCHOOL OUTREACH: Potential Leads

Note: Canvas public schools including charter and alternative institutions, religious and secular private schools. A good starting place is to visit school websites. There is no particular order to these checkpoints.

CHECKPOINTS	NAMES	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL
Student Members of Local School Board and State Board of Education <i>(public schools only)</i>			
Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee			
Student Members of Local Site-Based School Improvement Team			
Student Council President and Class Officers			
School Newspaper Editor(s)			
School TV Crew			
Video Production and Photography Department			
Extracurricular clubs (Young Democrats, Ecology Club; SADD, NOW Chapter, GSA, Key Club, etc.)			
Community Service-Learning Coordinator			
Peer Counselors and Conflict Resolution Mediators			

CHECKPOINTS	NAMES	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL
U.S. Government, Social Studies and Law Teachers			
School Debate Team, Model U.N., etc.			
Journalism, Communications, Media Literacy Teachers			
Environmental Science and Biology Teachers			
Health/Family Life Teachers			
School-Based Health Center and/or Nurse			
Career Center Counselor and/or Guidance Counselors			
Resource Teachers overseeing Independent Study Projects			
Girls, Boys & Co-ed Athletic Teams			
Student Rep on PTSA; PTSA President or Newsletter Editor			

SAMPLE COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Potential Leads

Note: There may be plenty of apathy or timidity but you never should run out of places to explore to find young people who might be interested in a particular cause.

CHECKPOINTS	NAMES	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL
Existing local youth-led advocacy groups			
Teen and Rec Centers, other community hubs			
Youth-serving organizations such as Girls Inc., YMCA, YWCA, 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs			
Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, Youth Commissions, etc.			
Mentoring programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters			
Teen Courts			
Correctional Facilities			
Health Clinics, Drop-in Centers, and other Social Service Agencies			
CHECKPOINTS	NAMES	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL

Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, etc.			
Movie Theaters & Coffee Houses			
Fairs and Festivals			
Concerts			
Sports Leagues			
YMCA Youth in Government and other civic education programs			
Museums			
Libraries			
Media (especially newspapers with youth journalists, radio stations, magazines, etc)			

SAMPLE GROUP PARTICIPATION FORM

Dear *(name)*,

Thanks for your interest in *(group name)*. Your involvement will help us make our *(mission)* a reality. Please complete this form as soon as possible and return to *(contact, address)*.

Phone number(s) _____ Best time to reach you _____

Street _____

City _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Name of parent(s)/guardian _____

(The consent form that's enclosed also needs to be signed by your parent or guardian and returned with this sheet.)

By joining this effort, please tell us which strengths you bring to *(group name)*:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> commitment | <input type="checkbox"/> research skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> knowledge of the issue | <input type="checkbox"/> online skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people skills | <input type="checkbox"/> artistic talents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> facilitating meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> video production skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> conflict resolution/mediation | <input type="checkbox"/> public speaking skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> writing skills | <input type="checkbox"/> other leadership skills |

Are there any projects or experiences that relate to *(group name)* that you've been involved in?

What do you hope to gain from being involved in *(group name)* (for example, meeting new people, receiving community service hours, learning new skills, trying to change the rules, etc.)?

Please return to: *(contact, group name, address)*

SAMPLE PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM & PHOTO RELEASE

Note: Tap the expertise of youth-serving agencies and other community organizations. Legal concerns are important, but certainly not an obstacle to collaborating with minors. Besides this paperwork, include a cover letter about the mission of the group, upcoming activities, and contact information. Perhaps ask parents/guardians whether they could help with transportation and/or chaperoning.

By signing below you are giving consent to your son's or daughter's participation in the program and activities of *(organization)* according to the following terms and conditions.

I am the parent or legal guardian of the child named below, and I fully approve and consent to my child's participation in the *(organization)* and in all related activities. I understand that *(organization)* will supervise my child's participation in these activities, and I fully authorize *(organization)* and its personnel, representatives, and volunteers to furnish my child with any necessary transportation, food, or lodging relating to these activities. I agree that I cannot hold the *(organization)* responsible for any actions by my child or any damages or harm those actions cause to my child or others, and I agree to hold harmless and indemnify the *(organization)* and any of its sponsors, board members, employees, agents, and volunteers for any liability sustained by any of them, as the result of negligent, willful, or intentional acts of my child, and I also release the *(organization)* and any of its sponsors, board members, employees, agents, and volunteers from any liability (including but not limited to liability arising from claims for negligence or other wrongful conduct) for personal injury, sickness, death, property damage, and expenses - other than the mentioned food, lodging, and transportation expenses - which may be directly or indirectly incurred by my child as a result of or in connection with my child's participation in the *(organization)* and related activities.

In the event the *(organization)* is unable to contact me or to secure my consent in the case of a medical emergency involving my child, I hereby give the *(organization)* and its representatives permission to transport my child to a doctor or hospital and secure proper medical care and assistance for my child, including, but not limited to, hospitalization, treatment, medication, or x-rays. I further authorize any treating physician to use his or her discretion in providing emergency treatment. I agree to assume the responsibility for all medical bills for any treatment provided to my child and for any related expenses.

I grant permission for my child to appear in person or in voice, video, or photographic presentation for radio, television, print, or Internet as it relates to these activities.

I understand it is a release of all claims. I understand I assume all risks of injury involved in these activities and voluntarily sign my name.

Child's Name _____ Date _____
 Parent/Guardian Name _____ Parent/Guardian Signature _____
 Street Address _____
 City _____ Zip Code _____
 Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, PLEASE CONTACT: (Name) _____
 Relation to Child _____ Telephone Number(s) _____

Please keep one copy and return the other signed form to *(contact, name, address)*. Thank you.

ICEBREAKERS & ENERGIZERS

Note: Here are several activities that are helpful at the beginning of a meeting to get people to wake up and meet one another.

Activity #1: Have each person find someone they don't know to be their partner. Then give everyone the following instructions for HAM & EGGS. Find out the following information from your partner: "H" is for home (where you were born if everyone is not from the same city); "A" is something about you (perhaps include a common theme such as your favorite movie; your dream car; a real person you admire); "M" is for moniker which means your nickname; and "EGGSpectations" is for your expectations for this meeting, campaign, conference, etc. After everyone has completed interviewing their partner, they should introduce him/her to the entire group and share his/her answers.

Activity #2: Divide up everyone into groups (minimum of 4; maximum of 8). Everyone extends their right hand to someone in the circle. Then everyone extends their left hand to someone else. The result is a pretzel. The challenge is to untangle the knot without releasing each other's hands. Let groups talk about how communication was essential.

Activity #3: Ask everyone to line up in order of their birthdays without saying a word. This activity is an excellent way to divide up a large group (up to 120) for small breakouts. Each "month" can then become a breakout group. If January only has a few folks and June is huge, ask for some people from June to join the other month to even up the numbers.

Activity #4: Everyone finds a partner. Ask each person to look carefully at the other person's hair, clothing, jewelry, etc. Then have each person turn away and change the position of a belt or earring and then face their partner. The challenge of the observation game is for the other person to notice what's different. Switch roles and let the other person be the one who is observant. Then ask everyone to change 12 things and see if the partner can detect all of the modifications. Most will believe it is impossible, but encourage out-of-the-box thinking. Emphasize creativity and even circumventing the rules, which can be important advocacy skills.

Activity #5: Find someone in the group that has the same amount of money in their wallet, the same number of brothers and sisters, the same hobby, the same first language, or some other interest or characteristic.

Note: *This get-acquainted game keeps everyone moving and exchanging tidbits of information with lots of people. Some advocacy-oriented content is included. Expect this activity to take between 5-10 minutes. Consider giving out silly prizes to the two winners.*

★ BINGO ★

Directions: Go around the room and ask individuals a question related to an item in one of the boxes. When you find someone who answers in the affirmative, write his/her name on the dotted line.

Winner #1: First to get 5 across, down, or diagonal

Winner #2: Completes most boxes BUT
the same person's name can ONLY be noted in two boxes

..... likes pistachio ice cream	..... has a dog or cat	..... has written a Letter to the Editor	..... has traveled to another state	..... has been on TV before
..... listens to more than 5 radio stations	..... has written or helped produce a rap	..... likes anchovies	..... likes to take photographs	..... has visited the State Legislature
..... likes public speaking	..... subscribes to a magazine	FREE SPACE	..... plays an instrument	..... likes to doodle and draw cartoons
..... knows where city council meets	..... plans to vote in the next election	..... has signed or drafted a petition	..... loves trivia	..... has helped create a web site
..... has produced a video or documentary	..... knows some VIP (Mayor, TV Anchor, etc.)	..... enjoys parrots, snakes, or iguanas	..... likes spicy Chinese food	..... has participated in a march or rally

AGEISM AWARENESS: MEMORY LANE ACTIVITY

Note: Many adults who collaborate with young people find it useful to unearth some memories dating back to their own teenage years. This exercise is intended to counter adult amnesia.

Instructions: Adults are asked to take a few minutes to think back to when they were in eighth grade or perhaps high school (depending on the age range of those young people with whom you are working). A facilitator can choose one or several questions and then invite everyone to spend several minutes exchanging stories with the person next to them. Invariably, the conversations will begin quietly and soon, laughter and earnest discussion will ensue. Several people can share their experiences with the entire group.

- Think back to your most embarrassing experience in high school . . .
- Think back to the teacher you really disliked . . .
- Think back to the teacher who was terrific . . .
- Think back to certain clothes you wore that your parents detested . . .
- Think back to arguments with your parent(s) about curfews . . .
- Think back to what music you liked . . .
- Think back to your first date . . .
- Think back to the worst party you went to . . .
- Think back to how your very first boss treated you . . .
- Think back to an adult whom you trusted . . .
- Think back to an adult who really respected your opinions . . .

Ideally, this trip down memory lane can be extended to include a discussion on "adultism." People of all ages can participate together in this activity that reveals how many young people are treated. One approach is to encourage everyone in the group to chime in with clichés they've heard that demean, belittle, ridicule, invalidate, or trivialize, for example:

- You're too young to understand.
- Trust me. I know a little more about this than you do.
- That's a neat idea but it will never happen.
- Because I said so.
- Wait 'till you start paying the rent, then you'll change your mind.

Another way to conduct this activity is to invite people to stand silently if they have experienced various situations. Here is a sampling of comments the facilitator could throw out to the group. (Note: some of these are not appropriate for all audiences.)

- Stand if you've ever been called a name by an older person.
- Stand if you've ever been called "stupid."
- Stand if you've been made to feel dumb by an adult.
- Stand if your ideas have been ridiculed by an adult.
- Stand if an adult ignored you.
- Stand if an adult watched you suspiciously in a store.
- Stand if you've been lied to by an adult.
- Stand if an adult stole your idea without giving you credit.
- Stand if you've been stopped by the police.
- Stand if you've been yelled at by an adult.
- Stand if an adult physically threatened you.
- Stand if an adult verbally threatened you.
- Stand if you've been hit or beaten by an adult.
- Stand if your personal privacy was invaded in any way by an adult.

Alternatively, individuals can exchange personal experiences and feelings in pairs or small groups, possibly mixing up the ages. A full group discussion can follow. The facilitator should make sure to devote plenty of time to positive experiences, for example, think of a time when an older person really stood by while others did not.

Another exercise is to consider is to have a small group of young people think of negative stereotypes about adults and create a short skit. Such improvisations often showcase boring adults who lack a sense of humor and have controlling personalities. Another group creates a short skit that focuses on positive traits. Allow each group to debrief with the entire group and facilitate the discussion.

SAMPLE ISSUE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Note: This discussion sheet and the next one were designed for two separate breakout sessions at a regional violence prevention summit that brought together youths and adults from the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia.

INCREASE THE PEACE IN SCHOOLS . . .

Do these programs and policies work at your school? What needs to happen?

Note: Some laws apply to all public schools in the state while other policies and programs may be in one school district or several schools.

PROPOSED & EXISTING PROGRAMS, POLICIES, LAWS	DC	MD	VA	NOTES
VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS – conflict resolution, peer mediation, anger management, coping skills, classroom discussions that promote racial and sexual tolerance	✓	✓	✓	
WEAPONS "ZERO TOLERANCE" POLICY – Automatic suspension or expulsion. (Student/Parent/Principal Contract for Eliminating Weapons from schools is an ongoing campaign by the MD Student Councils.)	✓	✓	✓	
GUN RESTRICTIONS to make it illegal to possess a firearm within 1,000 ft of school property (Handguns are illegal in DC.)	✓			
DRUG-FREE SCHOOL ZONE and PROGRAMS (New MD law requires all posted signs to include a hotline number to report suspected illegal drugs or weapons. Baltimore City Safe Schools Hotline did <u>not</u> receive a single call during 1996)	✓	✓	✓	
CLOSED CAMPUS for LUNCH - some high schools prohibit students from leaving school during lunch period	✓	✓	✓	
MANDATORY SCHOOL UNIFORMS (Prince George's County, MD School Board recently rejected such a proposal)				
SCHOOL SECURITY - security guards, police officers, volunteer parent patrols, metal detectors, cameras, etc.	✓	✓	✓	
DISCIPLINE POLICY for DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS and ALTERNATIVES to OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION-MD students can be suspended for 10 instead 5 days	✓	✓	✓	
TUTORING, HOMEWORK HELPERS, and MENTORING To prevent truancy and reduce the high school dropout rate	✓	✓	✓	
YOUR IDEAS FOR CHANGE at your own school and/or throughout the school district or state . . .				NOTES

DC Board of Education 202-724-4044
VA Board of Education 804-225-2540

MD Board of Education 410- 767-0100
Your Own Local School Board

SAMPLE ISSUE ANALYSIS (continued)

INCREASE THE PEACE IN THE COMMUNITY . . .

Are these laws and programs effective?
Do they need to be changed (overturned or strengthened)?

Note: Some of these programs and laws apply to everyone in the state while other policies may be in individual cities or counties.

PROPOSED & EXISTING PROGRAMS, POLICIES, LAWS	DC	MD	VA	NOTES
CITYWIDE NIGHT-TIME TEEN CURFEW (Prince George's County, MD curfew covers those 17 and under; parents of repeat offenders can be fined up to \$250; businesses can be fined up to \$500 for allowing youth to remain past curfew)	✓	✓		
AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES are considered by some to be more effective than night-time curfews since most violent crimes committed by young people occur between 3-6 pm.	✓	✓	✓	
RECREATION CENTERS and SAFE HAVENS (including midnight basketball and other sports as well as music, theater, dance, and visual arts programs) as alternatives to drugs, gangs, and other negative influences	✓	✓	✓	
BAN GUNS & WEAPONS from community centers and parks (Handguns are illegal in the District of Columbia)	✓			
NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY such as street lights, construct road barricades that limit access to drug selling locations, gun buy back programs, community policing and foot patrols, "safe corridors" to and from school, etc.	✓	✓	✓	
Restrict ALCOHOL ADVERTISING as one way to reduce alcohol-related violence. (Baltimore City bans billboards.)		✓		
YOUTH COURT with teen attorneys and judges who represent and sentence those charged with non-violent offenses including some drug- and alcohol-related cases	✓			
Minors charged with certain crimes (murder, armed robbery, carjacking, sexual assault, etc.) may be tried in ADULT COURT instead of juvenile court	✓	✓	✓	
JOB OPPORTUNITIES including summer youth jobs, youth apprenticeship, employment mentorship, and entrepreneurship	✓	✓	✓	
YOUR IDEAS for CHANGE				NOTES

DC City Council 202-724-8000
Your City or County Council . . .

VA State Legislature 1-804-786-6530
MD State Legislature 1-800-492-7122

SAMPLE ACTION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Recorder _____ Facilitator _____

Team Contact _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

★ Ideas for School Change . . .

★ Ideas for Community Change . . .

★ First Idea Our Team Will Tackle . . .

★ Our Campaign Name . . .

★ Recruitment: Whom Can We Involve . . .

★ Additional Adult Allies (rec center youth director, teacher, etc.) . . .

★ Immediate First Step (create a mission statement and recommendations, create several committees for recruitment, research, publicity, fundraising, legislative, etc.) . . .

★ Money and other resources we will need to accomplish our campaign . . .

★ Decision-makers and other important people we know . . .

★ Weekly community newspaper and other news media we will contact . . .



WHO DOES WHAT WHEN

PROJECT NAME: _____

OBJECTIVE: _____

ACTIONS What needs to be done?	BY WHOM Who will take action?	BY WHEN By what date will action be done?	RESOURCES & SUPPORT What human, political, \$ and other resources are needed? What resources are available?	POSSIBLE BARRIERS What individuals, and organizations might resist? How?	COMMUNICATION What organizations, allies, and news media need to be informed about the action?

CREATING A CAMPAIGN NAME

STEP #1: WORDPLAY.

Jot down key words and phrases that describe your effort. Think of terms about the issue you're trying to tackle. Remember to include words that highlight the role of young people.

STEP #2: NOW INVENT AN OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN NAME.

Refer to your list of words. String words together and see if a phrase or slogan emerges. Consider NOT abbreviating the name unless the letters make a word that's easy to remember and reinforces the goal of your campaign in a way that is clear and understandable to people not involved in your project.

STEP #3: CREATE A HEADLINE FOR A NEWS RELEASE.

Return to Step #1 and string together words to create a short newsworthy headline.

TELEPHONE TIPS FOR YOUNG ACTIVISTS

♦ **Practice.** Before you begin calling, it helps to do some role-playing to get more practiced at explaining the purpose of your call. The trick is to be upbeat and concise; try to keep your opening pitch to a few sentences. Each time you ask for information, you will get more experienced at being an effective researcher.

♦ **Introduce yourself** and mention the official name of your campaign or organization. It sometimes doesn't hurt to include your title, for example, research director or chairperson. Secretaries, the frequent barricade, are more likely to take you seriously and transfer your call to the appropriate person.

♦ **First Try + Follow-up.** Think of this discovery process as a fishing expedition. The first time you write or telephone, ask a general question to see if you get a bite. A good opener is: "I'm interested in knowing about your organization's most recent report or position paper on [a specific issue]?" A follow-up question might be whether you could receive the news release, publication list or whatever. (Often there is a charge for reports but if an executive summary is available, it is usually free.) Another approach is to call and ask: "Can you tell me who works specifically on the issue of _____? Could I get his/her title and address?" Then you are ready to call back or write a letter, preferably on your campaign or organization stationery.

♦ **Prove You're Serious.** One way to demonstrate that a project is not a whim or class assignment is to say, for example, "I am working on a proposal to be presented to the City Council. Could you please send information about..." Don't be surprised if you have to follow-up with another letter or a phone call.

♦ **Expect the Runaround.** Use the telephone as though you were shopping in a big mall. Gathering information requires browsing in many stores, so

expect to make as many as a dozen calls before finding the information you're after. Sometimes it helps first to call and just ask for the name of the person who concentrates on the specific issue of interest. Then call back and ask to speak to that individual. More than likely, your call will be transferred to that person because you'll sound like you know what you're doing. Don't get frustrated if you get the runaround. It happens to everyone. With each phone call, you'll figure out how to ask questions so your call gets routed to the right person.

♦ **Telephone Log.** Keep track of everyone you talk to, including secretaries, staff assistants and bigwigs. It always helps to greet the secretary or staff assistant by saying their name the next time around. They're more likely to be responsive.

♦ **Information Grapevine.** Every source should be able to lead you to other people or organizations. Always ask, "Can you suggest someone else I should contact?" Become an expert in the art of note taking and include these referrals in your telephone log. Then in future calls, drop names ("Hi, Ms. Lorenzo. Mr. Kim suggested I call you...").

♦ **Contact Reporters.** Notice if one reporter's name appears as a byline on newspaper articles about the issue under investigation. Then try to contact the journalist who may be able to give an overview and identify key policy-makers, organizations, and community leaders.

♦ **Play Constituent.** Even though you aren't of voting age yet, in the minds of elected officials, you will be soon. Don't hesitate to contact your city or county commissioners, school board members, and state and federal senators and representatives. Most likely you will wind up speaking with the staff to these elected officials. Remember these aides are the real worker bees and they influence the thinking and voting of their bosses.

WHO'S WHO IN CITY/COUNTY GOVERNMENT

NAME OF MY COUNCIL MEMBER

Telephone

Email

Address

Legislative Assistant

Clerk/Secretary

Background Information (Council member's profession; family information; number of kids and schools they attend; primary legislative concerns and committee assignments, etc.):

Council member has supported the following ordinances:

Background on other Council members, committee chairpersons, likely supporters, and likely opponents:

Notes:

WHO'S WHO IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE

NAME OF MY SENATOR

Telephone

Email

Address

Legislative Assistant

Clerk/Secretary

Background Information (Senator's profession, family information, number of children and schools they attend; primary legislative concerns, and committee assignments, etc.):

NAME OF MY HOUSE DELEGATE

Telephone

Email

Address

Legislative Assistant

Clerk/Secretary

Background Information (Delegate's profession, family information, number of children and schools they attend; primary legislative concerns, and committee assignments, etc.):

NAME OF MY DELEGATE

Telephone

Email

Address

Legislative Assistant

Clerk/Secretary

Background Information (Delegate's profession, family information, number of children and schools they attend; primary legislative concerns, and committee assignments, etc.):

LETTER WRITING TIPS TO POLICY-MAKERS

Astro-turf mail such as pre-printed postcards and form letters are counted when they arrive at a legislator's office, but personal letters get read and carry a lot more weight. So write and get other people to write too. Here are a few suggestions:

- Use your official campaign stationery.
- Letters can be typed or handwritten.
- Use the formal address if you like:

Attn: (name of legislative aide)
 The Honorable *(name)*
 Street Address
 City, State, Zip

Dear Senator *or* Council member *or* School Board Member:

- Clearly identify the issue and purpose of the letter in the first paragraph.
- If possible, refer to specific School Board resolution, proposed city ordinance, or state legislation by bill number.
- Be brief. Keep the letter to one page.
- Use your own words as much as possible.
- Include your full name, address, phone number, and age (this may trigger special attention or just the opposite — a very superficial response). If you get a form letter back that does not address your concern, write again. Make sure to mention that the response you received was confusing and ask the decision-maker to clarify his/her position. Your second letter is likely to get much more respect and attention. Once again, proving you are serious can cause these powerful decision-makers to respect your views. Remember your City Council members, School Board Members, Senators and Representatives work for you and should be willing to explain their legislative positions to you.
- Plan to follow up your letter with a phone call to the legislative assistant 7-10 days after you mail the letter.

PUBLICIZE! WRITING A MEDIA ADVISORY OR NEWS RELEASE

Media equals oxygen for your campaign. Even a short blurb in a neighborhood newsletter can drum up support. Publicity does the job of reaching far beyond your friends to thousands of people. Media attention also makes VIPs take you seriously. The hardest job is capturing the attention of newspaper and TV reporters but you have a unique advantage. It is unusual for the media to hear directly from young people, so think about sending out your *own* news release to publicize your campaign. A challenging task is to provide newspaper reporters and TV producers with provocative stories. As they say, "If it's not new, it's not news."

- Use your official looking letterhead with your campaign name.
- Keep the news release to one page, ideally double-spaced.
- Produce a headline that will grab attention.
- Include a strong quote and identify the student by name, perhaps with the description "a 16-year-old from Central High." (The media has an appetite for short sound bites that need little explanation. Also, busy reporters won't need to interview anyone because they've got a quote to include in their story.)
- Note the name and daytime telephone number of a spokesperson.

Besides school newspapers, web sites and blogs, there are dozens of outlets to publicize your story ranging from print to broadcast media.

- weekly community newspapers and daily newspapers
- guest column or op-ed ("op-ed" stands for a newspaper's opinion-editorial page)
- letter to the editor (much easier to get published than op-ed columns)
- national newspapers like *USA Today*
- a 20-second public service announcement read over the air by the radio DJ
- radio talk shows
- local midday TV shows and local evening news on TV
- community cable access channel
- Associated Press (AP) Wire Service (has a bureau in the State Capitol and usually offices in several other major cities. AP provides a steady stream of stories to virtually all TV, radio, and newspapers. Newsworthy or unusual AP stories wind up getting sent to the national wire service and being read by the producers from MTV to Oprah)

Numerous web sites such as *www.actforchange.com*, allow you to put in a zip code and capture email addresses for local media outlets. Call individual newspapers, radio and TV stations to get the full name (with correct spelling) and title of the assignment editor that the news release should be sent to. Mail, fax, or email your news release at least one week ahead of time. Then call to see if the release has arrived. Expect to re-send it; many news releases get buried with hundreds of others. On the morning of the event, call the contact person at each newspaper and station to sell your story again and ask if they plan to cover it.

CREATE A VIDEO TESTIMONIAL

What:

- A video testimonial can be as short as 30 seconds or wind up being a 30-minute documentary.

Why:

- A creative way to make your views and proposals with compelling visuals that reflect the diversity of your group. It can be used with numerous audiences to publicize your cause and gain support.

How:

- First, figure out what you want to say. Keep your message strong and compelling. Be specific and make concrete proposals. (Refer to "Slogans & Sound Bites")
- You can document the extent of a community issue. Have several individuals give brief statements emphasizing different points, and others conclude by making specific recommendations.
- Consider head shots with people talking plus other visuals.
- Find a home camcorder, video equipment from your school media center, or see if your community cable station can help.

Greatest Impact:

- Send or deliver a copy of your video testimonial along with a letter to key decision-makers. Make follow-up calls to these VIPs and their staff.
- Call TV stations and try to get a reporter or producer interested in your issue. Send or deliver your video testimonial to them. The news media can easily excerpt compelling visual sound bites. The media spotlight will pressure politicians and other decision-makers to pay attention to your proposals and respond.
- Show your video to other young people, community organizations and influential people to explain your concerns in a vivid and visual way that can help win more grassroots support.

LEGISLATIVE LINGO

Amendment - substitute language which changes the original bill.

Author - the legislator who introduces the bill, usually called the sponsor.

Bill - a proposal that is formally introduced for consideration by the legislature to create, change, or abolish a law.

Calendar - list of bills in the order in which they will be considered in the chamber.

Chairperson - the committee chair has considerable power in deciding legislative priorities, when hearings will be held, and determining committee work sessions when bills are debated and voted on.

Chamber - refers to either the House where all the Representatives meet to debate and vote on bills or the Senate where all the Senators meet to consider legislation.

Committee - both the House and Senate have their own committees that have responsibility for specific issues (transportation/safety, education, etc.). If a bill does not win a majority of votes from committee members, the bill is likely to die.

Conference Committee - a special committee composed of House and Senate committee members who meet to iron out all the differences between the two bills passed by both chambers.

Co-sponsor - a legislator from the same chamber as the author of the bill who supports the sponsor's legislative proposal.

First Reading - the formal introduction of a bill when it is referred to a committee.

Floor - the area in the chambers, either the House or Senate, where legislators debate and vote for or against on specific bills and floor amendments.

Hearing - a committee session to hear different points of view on specific bills.

Motion - a parliamentary mechanism made formally to a committee or to the full House or Senate, for example, a motion to take a final vote on a bill.

President - refers to the top post in the Senate; similar in rank to the Speaker of the House.

Representative - elected legislator to serve in the House

Second Reading - following committee action, a committee report is presented to the full House or Senate. After the second reading, the bill moves forward for consideration by the full House or Senate.

Senator - a state legislator who serves in the Senate.

Sine Die - final adjournment of the legislative session.

Speaker - the top post in the House and often considered the second most powerful position in state government after the Governor.

Sponsor - the legislator who introduces a bill and who has chief responsibility for pushing the bill through the legislative obstacle course.

Third Reading - after amendments have been voted on, the bill is read for a third time before the House or Senate votes on final passage.

Witness - an individual who testifies at a committee hearing, usually less than 5 minutes.

Veto - if the Governor decides not to sign a bill into law. To override a veto, two-thirds majority of both the House and the Senate is needed for the bill to become law.

PERSUADING YOUR PRINCIPAL ROLE-PLAY

NOTE: Refer to pages 73-74 in "Youth! The 26% Solution"

SCENE: Three students have invited a supportive teacher and one parent to a meeting with the school principal. You have less than 10 minutes to discuss your proposal and make your case.

OBJECTIVES: Your challenge is to convince the principal to listen carefully to your idea and get a commitment for a follow-up meeting for further discussion.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERS: * Create whatever situation and characters you want. *

#1 Principal - is polite but seems evasive.

#2 Student - introduces everyone to the Principal and gives some background and briefly introduces the proposal.

#3 Student - gives a personal firsthand account that makes the issue more compelling.

#4 Parent - adds support and says other parents are eager to see the student proposal get considered.

#5 Teacher - remains quiet most of the time but interjects supportive comments.

#6 Student - repeats key issue and asks about next steps.

"This is the first time in my 35 years as a school administrator that students have taken the lead on this issue and this needs to happen more."

~ Dr. Towers, Einstein High School Principal in Maryland

TELL IT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD ROLE-PLAY

NOTE: See Testifying Tips on pages 106-107 in "Youth! The 26% Solution"

SCENE: At the beginning of a Board of Education meeting, usually there is a public comment period where anyone can speak briefly about any issue. Typically there is a 2-minute time limit. You along with two other students are going to testify before the local School Board. Several Board members will make comments or ask you questions. The students should respond to questions carefully but use the option to get back to the Board member after gathering more information.

OBJECTIVES: To make a persuasive argument to the School Board Members, for example, to increase funding for an arts program or a school-based health center.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERS: *Create whatever situation and characters you want. *

#1 Chair of the School Board - is generally supportive and respectful.

#2 School Board Member - opposes the student proposal.

#3 School Board Member - appears uninterested during the student presentations but still asks questions.

#4 Team Captain of the Student Group - tells the Board about the group (an official campaign name also makes a good impression) and introduces the proposal, ideally incorporating a "sound bite."

#5 Student Group member - gives a personal firsthand account that makes the issue more compelling.

#6 Student Group member - summarizes results from a survey conducted by the group and hands over petitions that include signatures from other student organizations, teachers, coaches, PTA, etc. that support of the proposal.

"It's a matter of telling as many people as you can. Speak at the formal public meeting of the School Board. Get it out in the open. Most important, be specific about what needs to be changed."

~ Kendell Kelly, 12th grader who persuaded the School Board to replace her principal and adopt other student proposals

SEEKING SUPPORT OF A RELIGIOUS LEADER ROLE-PLAY

NOTE: Refer to pages 73-74 in "Youth! The 26% Solution"

SCENE: Three youth have arranged a meeting with a religious leader. They also have invited a supportive adult to be there primarily for moral support. You have less than 10 minutes to introduce your proposal and respond to questions.

OBJECTIVES: Your challenge is to convince this community leader to listen carefully to your idea and get a commitment for a follow-up meeting for further discussion.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERS: *Create whatever situation and characters you want. *

#1 Religious Leader - is polite but does not make any commitment.

#2 Youth Minister, Youth Program Director, etc. - is already aware of your proposal and very supportive.

#3 Young Person - introduces everyone to the religious leader and gives some background and briefly introduces the proposal.

#4 Youth - shares preliminary research findings (results of informal survey, etc).

#5 Youth - gives a personal firsthand account that makes the issue more compelling and asks for a follow up meeting with other decision-makers.

#6 Parent - adds support and says other parents are eager to see this proposal considered by executive board, congregation, etc.

"The young people were able to accomplish what adults had not been able to do for years."

~ Pedro Aviles, Washington, DC community activist

FACE-TO-FACE MEETING WITH YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR ROLE-PLAY

NOTE: Refer to pages 73-74 in "Youth! The 26% Solution"

SCENE: Three students have invited a community member to a meeting with an important legislator. You have less than 10 minutes to advocate your position on a particular bill that will be voted on soon.

OBJECTIVES: Your challenge is to convince your Senator or Delegate to listen carefully to your arguments regarding a specific bill.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERS: *Create whatever situation and characters you want. *

#1 State Legislator - is polite but does not seem ready to commit.

#2 Legislative Assistant - is friendly and takes notes.

#3 Team Captain for the group - introduces everyone and gives some background and briefly discusses the proposal.

#4 Youth - gives a personal firsthand account that makes the issue more compelling.

#5 Youth - presents results of research and endorsements of faith institutions, student groups, community organizations, etc.

#6 Older Constituent - knows the legislator and helped arrange the meeting.

"We had opposition by our own community, our friends' parents and our friends' older brothers and sisters. Once you get past that, it doesn't faze you. We got totally shutdown and we came back to the Statehouse knowing exactly what we did wrong and we were 100% more efficient."

~ Aaron Hobart, 8th grader who helped pass the first state Tobacco-Free School Law

HOLDING A NEWS CONFERENCE & RESPONDING TO REPORTERS' QUESTIONS" ROLE-PLAY

NOTE: See pages 66-67 about news conferences and also page 63 about 'Gotcha' Questions in "Youth The 26% Solution"

SCENE: At least one local TV station, the high school media team, and a newspaper reporter from the community paper are in attendance at your news conference.

OBJECTIVES: In less than 10 minutes, try to make a convincing case in support of your proposal and stick to your sound bites when reporters try to sidetrack you. Consider creating some real or imaginary visuals that will provide some interesting pictures besides "talking heads" for photographers and camera crews.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERS: *Create whatever situation and characters you want. *

#1 Moderator for News Conference - welcomes the news media and asks reporters to hold their questions until all the speakers have made brief statements. During the question and answer period, the moderator calls on individual reporters, repeats the question and then signals to one of the students who should answer.

#2 Youth Speaker - introduces the proposal, giving some background. Try to incorporate a sound bite.

#3 Next Student Speaker - builds on the prior statements and shares results of research (surveys, etc.).

#4 Supportive Community Member Speaker - endorses the campaign and mentions organizations that support the initiative.

#5 Friendly Reporter - asks open-ended questions such as "How did you get involved?" or "How do your friends feel about this proposal?"

#6 Unfriendly Reporter - wants controversy and asks students to talk about other topics.

*"The students were so well-prepared, they had done their homework.
The results of their survey helped them make their case effectively."
~ Local TV reporter with Florida station*

NEWS MEDIA CONTACTS

DAILY NEWSPAPER

Main Telephone #

AddressZip

Assignment Editor

Phone Email

Metro Desk Editor

Phone Email

Reporter

Phone Email

Other Contacts

Web site Emails

WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

Main Telephone # Fax

AddressZip

Managing Editor

Phone Email

Other Contacts

Web site Emails

RADIO STATION

Main Telephone # Fax

AddressZip

Assignment Editor

Phone Email

Reporter

Phone Email

Other Contacts

Web site Emails

RADIO STATION

Main Telephone # Fax

AddressZip

Assignment Editor

Phone Email

Reporter

Phone Email

Other Contacts

Web site Emails

TV STATION
Main Telephone # Fax
Address Zip
Morning News Program
Assignment Editor Phone
Producer Phone
Other Contacts
Evening News Program
Assignment Editor Phone
Other Contacts
Other Shows (specials, weekend programs, youth programs)
Assignment Editor Phone
Producer Phone
Other Contacts
Web site Emails

TV STATION
Main Telephone # Fax
Address Zip
Morning News Program
Assignment Editor Phone
Producer Phone
Other Contacts
Evening News Program
Assignment Editor Phone
Other Contacts
Other Shows (specials, weekend programs, youth programs)
Assignment Editor Phone
Producer Phone
Other Contacts
Web site Emails

COMMUNITY CABLE ACCESS TV
Telephone # Fax
Address Zip
Morning News Program
Assignment Editor Phone
Producer Phone
Other Contacts
Evening News Program
Assignment Editor Phone
Other Contacts
Other Shows (specials, weekend programs, youth programs)
Assignment Editor Phone
Producer Phone
Other Contacts
Web site Emails

CREATE A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

A 20-second PSA has a better chance of being broadcast on radio stations than a longer announcement. That means you are limited to about 30 words so choose each one carefully. If you include a telephone number, try to convert some of the numbers into a word that is easy to remember, for example, "Call 97-YOUTH." Time the script, include the exact length along with the starting and ending dates that you would like it to be aired, a contact name, and a telephone number.

RADIO PSA

Contact Name and Telephone:

Starting Date:

Ending Date:

Exact Length:

- END -

Type this double-space and print out on campaign letterhead. Contact individual radio stations to get the name, title and correct address of the person in charge, usually Public Affairs Director. Follow-up within a few days of sending it out to see if they can air it. The station does not have to air your PSA so it will be your group's persuasive power that will convince them to do it!

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

The following list is by no means comprehensive, but includes both practical and provocative reading. Some of these resources can be downloaded from the web site address noted.

ACT YOUR AGE! A CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF ADOLESCENCE by Nancy Lesko (no relation) published by Routledge Press

BEYOND HEROES AND HOLIDAYS edited by E. Lee, D. Menhart and M. Okazawa-Rey published by Teaching for Change www.teachingforchange.org

BEYOND RESISTANCE! YOUTH ACTIVISM AND COMMUNITY CHANGE: NEW DEMOCRATIC POSSIBILITIES FOR PRACTICE AND POLICY FOR AMERICA'S YOUTH by S. Ginwright, P. Noguera and J. Cammarota published by Routledge Press

15 POINTS: SUCCESSFULLY INVOLVING YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING published by Youth on Board www.youthonboard.org

FRAMING YOUTH: 10 MYTHS ABOUT THE NEXT GENERATION by Mike Males published by Common Courage Press

GUIDE FOR THE POWERLESS, AND THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW THEIR OWN POWER by Samuel Halperin published by American Youth Policy Forum www.aypf.org

INVOLVING YOUTH IN PUBLIC POLICY by California Adolescent Health Collaborative · www.californiateenhealth.org/resources/res_involve.html

MILLENNIALS RISING: THE NEXT GREAT GENERATION by Neil Howe and William Strauss published by Vintage Books

THE MOBILIZER'S GUIDEBOOK by David Smith published by Mobilize www.mobilize.org

MOVING BEYOND ICEBREAKERS: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO GROUP FACILITATION, LEARNING & ACTION published by Center for Teen Empowerment www.teenempowerment.org

NO KIDDING AROUND! AMERICA'S YOUNG ACTIVISTS ARE CHANGING OUR WORLD AND YOU CAN TOO by Wendy Schaetzel Lesko published Youth Activism Project www.YouthActivismProject.org

PROMOTING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING by Gerison Lansdown for UNICEF www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf

PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION ACTION KIT FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS by National League of Cities' Institute http://www.nlc.org/nlc_org/site/files/reports/promoting.pdf

SHAPING THE FUTURE: WORKING TOGETHER, CHANGING COMMUNITIES by the Hampton Coalition for Youth youthcom@city.hampton.va.us

SOUL OF A CITIZEN: LIVING WITH CONVICTION IN A CYNICAL TIME by Paul Loeb published by St. Martin's Press

STATE YOUTH POLICY: HELPING ALL YOUTH TO GROW UP FULLY PREPARED AND FULLY ENGAGED by Thaddeus Ferber and Karen Pittman www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

TAKING DEMOCRACY IN HAND: YOUTH ACTION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA by Barbara Cervone · www.whatkidscando.org

TEACHING TOLERANCE free magazine published two times a year by the Southern Poverty Law Center www.teachingtolerance.org

TIPPING POINT: HOW LITTLE THINGS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE by Malcolm Gladwell published by Time Warner Books

TOOLS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE MANUAL published by Youth Leadership Institute www.yli.org

VOICE FOR YOUTH ADVOCATES bimonthly magazine for young adult librarians an excellent resource for anyone who works with young people www.voya.com

WHAT WE CAN'T TELL YOU: TEENAGERS TALK TO THE ADULTS IN THEIR LIVES by Kathleen Cushman published by Next Generation Press www.whatkidscando.org

YOUTH IMPACT: YOUTH-LED EVALUATION by California Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families & Youth In Focus · <http://youthinfocus.net>

YOUTH ORGANIZING: NOTES FROM THE FIELD by Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing www.fcyo.org

YOUTH! THE 26% SOLUTION by Wendy Lesko and Emanuel Tsourounis published by Youth Activism Project www.YouthActivismProject.org

YOUTH TODAY (\$14.95/year) published bimonthly by Youth Today www.youthtoday.org

WEB SITES

Here is an eclectic sampling of sites and please share your favorites with our clearinghouse.

Academy for Youth Development - www.aed.org
Act for Change - www.actforchange.com
Alliance for Civic Renewal - www.ncl.org/anr
Americans for Informed Democracy - www.aidemocracy.org
Ashoka Innovators for the Public - www.changemakers.net
Atlas Corps - www.atlascorps.org
Campaign for Student Involvement - www.studentinvolvement.net
Center for Community Change - www.communitychange.org
Center for Democracy and Citizenship - www.publicwork.org
Center for Responsive Politics - www.opensecrets.org
Civic Practices Network - www.cpn.org
Common Action - www.commonaction.org
Community Partnerships with Youth - www.cpyinc.org
Constitutional Rights Foundation - www.crf-usa.org
Data Center - www.datacenter.org
Do Something - www.dosomething.org
First Government - www.firstgov.gov
Forum for Youth Investment - www.forumforyouthinvestment.org
Foundation Center - www.fdncenter.org
Free Child - www.freechild.org
Global Kids - www.globalkids.org
Global Youth Action Network - www.youthlink.org
Midwest Academy - www.mindspring.com/~midwestacademy
Movement Strategy - www.movementstrategy.org
National Assembly - www.nassembly.org
National Community Building Network - www.ncbn.org
National League of Cities - www.nlc.org/iyef.htm
National Network for Youth - www.nn4youth.org
National Service-Learning Clearinghouse - www.servelearn.org
National Youth Leadership Council - www.nylc.org
National Youth Rights Association - www.youthrights.org
Open Society - www.opensociety.org
Public/Private Ventures - www.ppv.org
Project Vote Smart - www.vote-smart.org
Search Institute - www.search-institute.org
Street Law - www.streetlaw.org
What Kids Can Do - www.whatkidscando.org
We Interrupt This Message - www.interrupt.org
WireTap Magazine - www.wiretapmag.org
Youth Action Net - www.youthactionnet.org
Youth Action Research Center - www.incommunityresearch.org/teenactionresearch
Youth Activism Project - www.YouthActivismProject.org
YouthBuild USA - www.youthbuild.org
Youth Noise - www.youthnoise.org
Youth Radio - www.youthradio.org
Youth Service America - www.ysa.org
Youth Venture - www.youthventure.org



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The vision of the Youth Activism Project draws on Wendy's long-term commitment of encouraging ordinary people, especially the powerless - from migrants harvesting grapes to those too young to vote - to be influential advocates with the powers-that-be. She embraces the idea that young people should be seen and heard. "Not only do Millennials need to be encouraged to speak out," she says, "the adult world must be persuaded to value young people's perspectives and proposals for community change."

Wendy worked for three years as a community organizer for Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers immediately after graduating from Rollins College. During her last two years of college, she created a recreational program for 100 children of Florida orange pickers about 45 minutes from campus. In 1975, Wendy returned to her hometown of Washington, D.C. and became managing editor of the *Congressional Monitor* and also started "Today on the Hill," a live daily broadcast on WTOP radio predicting legislative skirmishes. After six years of daily deadlines, she co-authored *The Maternity Sourcebook* (Warner Books) and then *The People Rising* (Thunder's Mouth Press).

In 1992, Wendy wrote *No Kidding Around! America's Young Activists Are Changing Our World & You Can Too* and launched the Youth Activism Project. Her other books and resources include:

- *Youth! The 26% Solution* with 19-year-old Emanuel Tsourounis
- *Maximum Youth Involvement: The Complete Gameplan for Community Action*
- *Knock-Your-Socks-Off Training Teens to Be Successful Activists!*
- *Youth Advocacy Module* for U.S. Health & Human Service
- *Student Activist Training Action Guide* for MADD & U.S. DOT NHTSA
- *Youth Empowerment Question Why* for North Carolina Department of Health
- *Youth As Equal Partners* for United Way of America

Wendy has presented over 1,000 keynote speeches and workshops in more than 30 states to audiences of all ages to such organizations as American Cancer Society, American Library Association, California Wellness Foundation, City at Peace, Earth Force, Humane Society of U.S, Missouri Governor's Youth Cabinet, National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, United Way of America, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Amber Thornton, VP for Technical Assistance & Training for the American Legacy Foundation says: "If you are looking to engage an energetic, passionate and credible expert on youth activism issues-Wendy Lesko is 'top shelf!' The Youth Activism Project is the 'go to' source for facilitating and galvanizing adults and youth groups." *Youth Today* writes: "Wendy Schaezel Lesko is mentor to many of the nation's most accomplished young leaders."

Together with a multicultural group of students and African women, in 2004 Wendy founded SCHOOL GIRLS UNITE where young people in Africa and America collaborate and advocate for access to education for the 70 million girls in developing countries who do not go to school. This ambitious global girls leadership development initiation won the Innovations in Civic Engagement's Global Youth Volunteering international Award in 2007. The youth-designed website is www.schoolgirlsunite.org.

Also, Wendy received WETA's "Hometown Heroes" 2004 Award, the PBS television station for the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, with her co-founder of Students Practicing And Respecting Knowledge [SPARK]. She started this volunteer-run nonprofit program in 1996 that provided free one-on-one tutoring twice a week to over 200 public school students at community center over a period of 12 years.

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