

CHARTING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

(Adapted from the Points of Light Foundation, "Mapping Youth Programs for Youth Involvement" handout)

OVERVIEW

This activity "maps" the existence and nature of youth participation in the community.

OBJECTIVES

- To distinguish the various types of youth–adult relationships
- To identify existing areas and opportunities for youth participation in the community

TIME REQUIRED

Approximately one hour

WHAT	TIME	HOW	MATERIAL
STEP 1: Setting the Context	5 minutes	<p>Introduce the spectrum of attitudes using Handout 2A or a flip chart with key points.</p> <p>As you describe each relationship, ask the group for a few examples.</p> <p>Say to the group, "Now we are going to look at this more closely by mapping youth involvement in our own community."</p>	Flip chart or copies of Handout 2A
STEP 2: Mapping	20 minutes	<p>Give everyone a copy of Handout 2B, and go through the instructions. It is helpful to go through the instructions using an example that you have created.</p> <p>NOTE: if the group has already done the mind map activity described in Section 3 on page 116, you can use the maps as a base for step 1 on the handout.</p>	Handout 2B
STEP 3: Sharing	20 minutes	If the group is small, offer each person a chance to share its map with the group. If it is large, split into smaller groups with a facilitator in each group.	
STEP 4: Reflection	10 minutes	<p>Ask the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What images from the maps stand out to you? ■ Were there any surprises for you as people shared? ■ What similarities did you see in people's maps? ■ What differences did you see? ■ In general, how are youth involved in this community? ■ What opportunities for new roles for youth exist? Where? ■ What does this tell us about our work as a group? 	

THE SPECTRUM OF ATTITUDES

It is helpful to look at attitudes underlying youth–adult relationships as falling along a spectrum.



Youth as Objects:

Adults exercise arbitrary and near total control over youth. Programs and activities are TO youth.

Youth as Recipients:

Based on what they think is in the youth's best interest, adults determine needs, prescribe remedies, implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes with little youth input. Programs and activities are FOR youth.

Youth as Resources:

Youth help adults in planning, implementing, and evaluating work. Programs and activities are FOR and WITH youth.

Youth–Adult Partnerships:

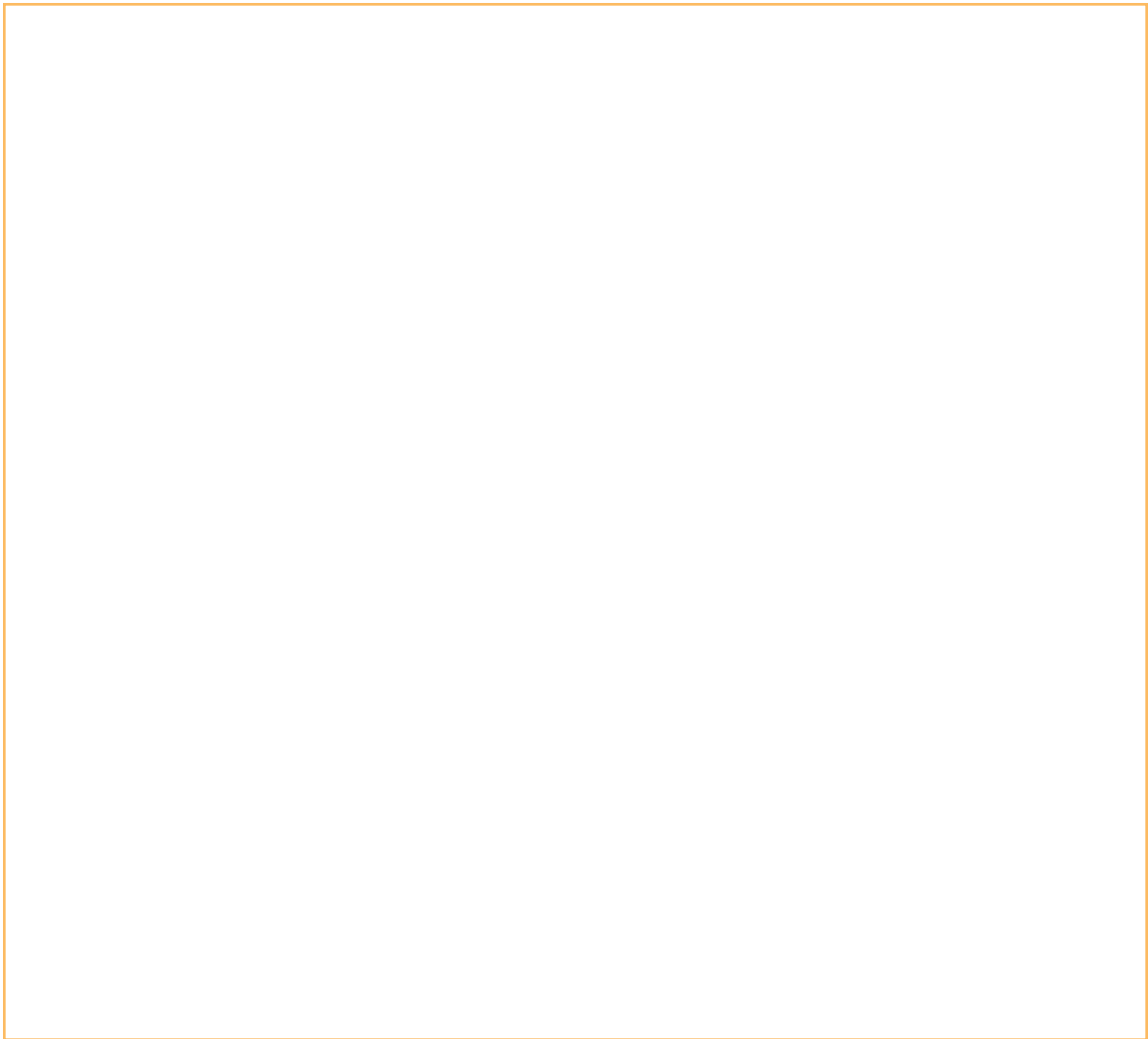
Youth and adults share decision-making power equally. Programs and activities are WITH youth.

(Adapted from Lofquist, *The Technology of Prevention Workbook: A Leadership development Program*, 1989).



CHARTING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

1. Draw a map of your connections to organizations and groups in the community. Include the organizations and groups that you are a part of, that many youth are a part of, and that many adults are a part of.
2. With a different color pen, highlight the points at which young people participate. Make a note about how they participate:
 - P = as partners (with youth)
 - R = recipients (for youth)
 - O = as objects (to youth)
3. With another color pen, make a star to indicate the areas where new opportunities exist for youth to participate.



“TEN COMMANDMENTS” FOR INVOLVING YOUTH IN COMMUNITY BUILDING

1. Always start with the gifts, talents, knowledge, and skills of young people—never with their needs and problems.
2. Always lift up the unique individual, never the category to which the young person belongs (e.g., “Maria, the great soccer player,” not “Maria, the ‘at-risk youth’”).
3. Share the convictions that (a) every community is filled with useful opportunities for young people to contribute and (b) there is no community institution or association that can’t find a useful role for young people.
4. Try to distinguish between real community-building work and games or fakes—because young people know the difference.
5. Fight—in every way you can—age segregation. Work to overcome the isolation of young people.
6. Start to get away from the principle of aggregation of people by their sameness. Don’t put everyone who can’t read in the same room. It makes no sense.
7. Move as quickly as possible beyond youth “advisory boards” or councils, especially those boards with only one young person on them.
8. Cultivate many opportunities for young people to teach and lead.
9. Reward and celebrate every creative effort, every contribution made by young people. Young people can help take the lead here.
10. In every way possible, amplify this message to young people: “We need you! Our community cannot be strong and complete without you.”

Kretzmann, “Community Includes Youth”, *Wingspread Journal*, Volume 17, issue 3, p11.

