

# Youth Participation: How do we make it happen?

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## **Youth Participation: How do we make it happen?**

The ACT for Youth initiative promotes positive youth development principles. One of the key principles is youth participation and/or youth voice. Young people bring their own perspective to the table; their ideas and energy are essential to our efforts to make communities healthier and more supportive places for young people. Shep Zeldin studied and outlined the benefits of youth participation to adults, organizations and communities. Following his lead, we defined youth participation as: "...involving youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with the opportunity for planning, and/or decision making affecting others... There is mutuality in teaching and learning (between youth and adults) where each age group itself is a resource for the other and offers what it uniquely can provide". (Shep Zeldin et al., 2000, pg. 1)

Working with ACT sites in upstate New York around the issue of youth involvement, we observed that most sites experienced great difficulties in identifying meaningful roles for young people. Recruiting, preparing and retaining young people were challenging tasks. In general, the shift from seeing young people as consumer or recipient of services to seeing young people as resources or active participants involved in leadership and decision-making has been very demanding for many adults in the youth service arena.

In an attempt to provide assistance to the ACT communities we developed a two-phase training program. The first training addressed organizational readiness issues, while the second training focused on creating youth adult partnerships. The need for a two-phase approach emerged in work sessions with young people and adults from successful youth participation projects in Rochester, Monroe County, and this was confirmed by a review of current literature on youth adult partnerships and youth participation (Appendix IV).

### ***Organizational Readiness for Youth Participation***

This half-day workshop challenged adult service providers to identify meaningful roles for young people, as well as benefits and organizational barriers. It asked participants to explore ways to overcome these obstacles and to discuss multiple and creative ways to outreach, recruit and train young people.

### ***Creating Youth Adult Partnerships***

This full day training brought young people and adults of each ACT community together to explore expectations, needs and challenges they bring to the partnership. It engaged participants in communication and teambuilding activities and introduced concrete visioning and planning methods. Youth participated as co-facilitators providing many creative ways to improve communication and social interaction between young people and adults.

### **Training Implementation**

The original plan was to offer both trainings consecutively in each ACT site. The organizational readiness training was offered first in March, followed by the youth adult partnership training in April. The second phase was offered during the April school break to make it easier for young people to attend a full-day training (Appendices I & II).

#### **ACT Sites and Schedules**

<b>ACT Site</b>	<b>Org. Readiness Training</b>	<b>Youth Adult Partnership Training</b>
Erie County	3/11/02	4/04/02
Cattaraugus Co.	3/12/02	5/11/02
Otsego County	3/18/02	4/18/02
Onondaga Co.	3/21/02	4/17/02
Jefferson Co.	3/22/02	4/16/02
Capital District	3/25/02	7/2/02
♦ Albany; Rensselaer; Schenectady		

We succeeded in doing both trainings in each ACT site. Two youth adult partnership trainings had to be scheduled at a later time; one occurred on a Saturday in May, the last one in July once school had ended.

### **Training Data**

Organizational Readiness Training: 111 participants attended; attendance ranged from 10 participants to 30 per site.

Youth Adult Partnership Training: 145 participants attended, 62 adults (43%) and 83 young people (57%). In 5 out of 6 sites, young people outnumbered adults; in one instance at a ratio of one to four.

- **Organizational Readiness Training:**

Most participants represented community agencies that provide services to young people such as Cooperative Extension, YMCA/YWCA, Youth Bureaus, Community Action agencies, substance abuse services, mental health, health department, probation and juvenile justice, Catholic Charities, community centers. Several participants represented school districts; some represented state departments (OCFS, OASAS, DOH). Two community volunteers attended. The majority of participants were involved in the ACT for Youth initiative.

- **Youth Adult Partnership Training:**

The original concept was to prepare adults for this training through the organizational readiness workshop. We hoped that close to 50% of the first training group would return for the second training. This did not happen; instead 29 participants (26%) returned and attended both trainings. Counties varied greatly – ranging from only 1% in one county to 41% in another.

Adults represented youth serving agencies as described above. Noticeably, schools were scarcely represented at this training.

Most of the young people who attended the training were involved in the ACT initiative; a few were involved in other youth participation programs. In one county, all the young people were affiliated with a youth program that did not have close ties with the ACT initiative.

While we do not know the reasons why only a rather small number of adults came back for the second part of the training, we can offer a couple of possible explanations. It could be that many service providers are not that committed to youth participation that they would give up a whole workday (or for some a vacation day or a Saturday) to attend a training with young people. Or, it could be that the majority of participants felt that they knew how to work with young people and thus would not benefit from such a training. Or, maybe we are simply nervous or uncomfortable about spending that much time with young people?

## Training feedback

<b>Organizational Readiness:</b>
93% of the participants filled out evaluation form.
98% agreed/strongly agreed that the training was valuable.
97% agreed/strongly agreed that the material would be helpful to their work.

<b>Youth adult partnership:</b>
88% of the participants filled out evaluation forms.
96% agreed/strongly agreed that the training was useful.
94% agreed/strongly agreed that they felt more comfortable working in youth adult

## Findings and observations

### *Organizational Readiness for Youth Participation*

We started the training with an exploration of meaningful roles for young people within organizations. Not surprisingly the majority of participants shared many examples of young people involved in planning and implementing projects. It was less likely that young people were involved in an advisory or consulting capacity or placed in positions that allowed them to make decisions about staffing or organizational structures (i.e., boards or hiring committees). There was some confusion about the different levels of decision-making. Many youth programs provide young people with opportunities to make decisions, but often these decisions only affect the youth themselves or a small group of people. Rarely does it affect the organization and its staffing and policies. During the training participants identified and discussed organizational barriers and ways to overcome these roadblocks. Two categories emerged – barriers that reflect subjective factors such as individual adult attitudes and philosophies, and objective factors such as laws, regulations, and funding streams. Subjective factors were discussed far more frequently, focusing on

- adults' reluctance to change and to give up control,
  - adults' insensitivity to young people's developmental needs,
  - varying knowledge of what constitutes youth development.
- At the same time, participants expressed a multitude of ideas and strategies to address and overcome these barriers, from involving young people in the adult

education process to developing clear mission statements and agency policies that reflect youth development principles.

With regard to objective barriers, participants identified a list of legal restraints, agency policies and funding restrictions. These factors appeared largely to be out of participants' control to change; however, during the discussion of agency policies, attendees realized that often policies are not written in stone. They can be changed if there is adult commitment to do so. Participants had many ideas on how to re-evaluate and modify policies and procedures, often involving young people in the process at the agency, community and state level.

A frequently cited obstacle to youth participation is recruiting and retaining young people. We addressed this issue separately and gave participants the opportunity to discuss in detail the logistics of youth recruitment and involvement. Attendees shared many effective strategies to motivate young people to get involved, to recruit a diverse youth population, to retain them and to prepare them to work with adults and adult organizational structures. They also had very creative ideas on logistical problems such as transportation, scheduling meetings.

In general, we found that professionals in the youth development arena appeared to have a good understanding of the organizational barriers to youth participation. They also had many creative ideas to overcome obstacles and to effectively outreach and retain young people. At the same time, they acknowledged their frustrations with the process, especially if they aim to involve young people as partners in power sharing positions. It takes a lot of time and effort to educate co-workers and community people about youth development and to build and support stable youth involvement. The process of recruiting and retaining young people appeared to be especially challenging given young people's changing developmental needs and the fact that they outgrow their involvement and disengage after a few years or even months.

### *Youth Adult Partnership*

In the beginning of the training we asked participants to divide into two groups, youth by themselves and adults by themselves. Both groups discussed the benefits and barriers of youth adult partnerships. In addition, they discussed what they needed from the other group to make it work. Interestingly, both groups identified similar barriers in particular, lack of understanding (youth culture versus adult culture), poor communication and biases. Young people in all trainings told adults that they needed

- respect
- open communication
- confront biases
- guidance and support.

Young people realized that they need adult guidance, preparation and support to be able to partner in decision making with adults. This is an important message for adults who at times see youth participation as a decision between handing things over to young people (let them do it by themselves) and assigning them roles while telling them exactly what to do. Young people's needs are somewhere in between those two extremes. They need preparation in the sense of skill building (e.g., facilitation, communication, decision making) and education regarding organizational structures, policies and procedures so that they can participate as partners. The challenge for adults is to provide the guidance and training in such a way that it is not perceived as "I know better – do as I say" attitude.

The training demonstrated that when given the opportunity to work together in a comfortable atmosphere, young people and adults can communicate, can get to know each other better and feel comfortable with each other and can engage in meaningful activities as partners. Two strategies seemed to be effective. First, it is very helpful to infuse teambuilding, relationship-building activities (see energizers) into the meeting schedule. This will improve open communication, decrease stereotypes, and increase the comfort level for young people and adults. Secondly, it is crucial to re-evaluate how meetings or work sessions are being conducted. We need to explore new tools/mechanisms to structure discussions, make decisions, plan activities – strategies that are interactive, inclusive and utilize a multi-sensory presentation.



## **Training impact**

In addition to feedback about the training, we asked participants of the organizational readiness workshop several questions about transferring information/strategies learned in the workshop to their work place. This was a voluntary assignment. We asked participants to write down strategies they would try to implement at work:

- one strategy to address organizational obstacles,
- one strategy to recruit and/or retain young people,
- one strategy to create a new role for young people in the community.

We committed to contact them via phone three months later to see what they were able to accomplish.

31 participants (30%) stepped forward to answer these follow up questions. Of those, 21 (19%) provided complete contact information. 14 participants (13%) were available for the follow up interviews.

The information we received in the follow up interviews was rather inconclusive. Several participants did not remember what they had written down, or they were pre-occupied with changes in the agency that had occurred in the meantime. Most interviewees continued to struggle with the same logistic issues such as transportation, scheduling meetings, co-workers resistance or turnover, or they were still thinking about the implementation of new ideas. Overall, it was not possible to make a clear connection between the training outcomes and changes at the workplace. In general, transfer of new strategies or knowledge from training to the workplace is extremely difficult because the workplace and the co-workers have not changed and learned new things. Given the vagueness of some interview comments, it is also likely that many participants have discussed and subscribed to the concept of youth participation in theory, but they are still struggling to put it into practice.

## **Lessons Learned**

By taking a step back and reflecting on this training experience, there are several key issues that need to be addressed:

- ✓ There is still some confusion about the concept of youth participation. We need to clarify that participation involves decision-making as well as affecting others with these decisions. It goes beyond personal choice. It is ultimately about working and sharing power with adults.

- ✓ Overall, professionals in the field of youth development have a good grasp of the organizational barriers to youth participation; they also have many creative ideas and strategies to overcome those and recruit and retain young people in the process. However, they have a tough time putting it into practice. Youth participation really requires a lot of effort on three levels: a) to assess honestly our personal biases and commitment to young people; b) to educate other adults and change organizational structures, and c) to learn how to work effectively with young people of different ages and diverse backgrounds.
- ✓ Implications for training: Offering half day and full day trainings might not be the best way to reach the right people. Participants are self-selected; certain community groups are often not represented such as local government, churches, or schools. Furthermore, it is difficult to engage supervisors or administrators in long trainings.

One of the most effective ways of educating adults about the power of youth participation is to have young people demonstrate it. An alternative approach might be to work closely with a local groups of young people and adults by providing shorter, focused technical assistance sessions to prepare them for presentations, advocacy, board representation or creating their own advisory councils.

**APPENDIX I**  
**Organizational Readiness for Youth Participation**

## Training Outline

**Target audience:** ACT partners, youth and human services, volunteers working with young people

**Objectives:**

- increase understanding of youth participation
- identify organizational barriers and possible solutions
- identify ways to recruit and engage young people

### I. Introductions (30 minutes)

Introduce trainers and purpose of workshop.

Have participants introduce themselves: name, organization. Then answer the question:

*Why do you think youth involvement/participation is important?*

Write reasons for youth involvement on newsprint. Process those comments.

### II. Organizational self-assessment – Meaningful Roles for Young People (30 min)

*Prepare the exercise by hanging a drawing of a large x/y graph showing three levels (on newsprint) on front wall. Have colored sheets of paper ready to be taped to the graph (see below).*

Viewing young people as resources and not as recipients is a key shift in thinking. It is pretty safe to assume that youth participation, involving young people in planning, implementing, evaluating and decision making, means different things to most of us. Young people can be involved in agencies or initiatives in many ways. It will be helpful to take a little time to share with each other what your experience with youth involvement has been – how have you had young people involved in your agency or initiative? What roles / responsibilities did they have?

*Divide participants into four (or five) small groups. Each group will spend 10 minutes discussing examples of how they have involved young people in their work.*

Ask participants from each group to volunteer an example. One trainer will write the example on a piece of colored paper and post it on the appropriate level of the graph. Do not discuss yet the different levels of the graph.

Guide the answers a little if all the responses are on the program level – ask for examples of youth involvement – youth as advisors, trainers, decision-makers.

*Explain the graph:*

- Describe the three levels, label them (bottom: projects, tasks and service learning; middle: input and consultation; top: shared leadership)
- Fact: Not all young people will be able to participate at all levels
- Fact: Higher levels require more time, skills and commitment
- Fact: There are more opportunities for young people to be involved in concrete tasks, projects. It can be the starting point to learn skills needs in more responsible positions.
- Fact: The same graphs holds up for adults as well.

Summarize key findings, highlight that there are many ways to involve young people, and that young people at the top of the pyramid have to grow over time into these roles.

Define youth participation:

Youth participation is involving youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with the opportunity for planning and/or decision making affecting others...There is mutuality in teaching and learning (between youth and adults) where each age group itself is a resource for the other and offers what it uniquely can provide. (National Commission on Resources for Youth, 1974) – handout.

### **III. Benefits of Youth Participation (30 min)**

If youth participation is more complex than just inviting young people to the table, why do it? What are the benefits?

*Prepare for this exercise by hanging newsprint sheets on three different walls. Label one: Benefits for young people, one: Benefits for adults, and the last one: Benefits for the organization. Place several markers with each newsprint.*

*Round robin: Divide group into three groups, assign each group to one newsprint, give them five minutes to write down benefits, then ask the groups to move on to the next station (clockwise), etc.*

Process benefits starting with young people, then adults and lastly organizations. Ask if anybody wants to add something. Summarize findings, highlight organizational benefits and refer to Shep Zeldin's study – handouts.

#### **IV. Organizational Roadblocks (30 min)**

Looking at the organizational benefits in particular, I assume that probably all of us would like to see these benefits in our own organization/initiative. But we also know that there will roadblocks in our work places - barriers we need to overcome to get there. Let's take a minute to think about your workplace and the barriers you foresee.

*Ask participants to sit together with a partner (does not have to be a colleague) and discuss barriers and possible solutions. Have paper available for folks. Give them 10 minutes.*

Process. Ask for volunteers to name a barrier and possible solution. Write comments down on newsprint. Ask if other people identified the same barrier but different solutions. Add them. Do not repeat issues.

#### **V. Engaging young people (30 min)**

*Prepare four large worksheets (newsprint size) for the following topics:*

- Why should young people get involved?
- Logistical issues
- Recruitment strategies
- How do we prepare them?

We talked about the many ways young people can be involved in our work, our efforts; we talked about the benefits and possible barriers and problems that might get in the way of really engaging young people. Finally, we want to spend some time at how we engage young people. We assume that they want to be involved – is that really so? What are some practical concerns that often get in the way? How and who do we outreach? And how do we prepare them?

To save time, we prepared a large worksheet for each of these issues. We have four groups; each group will take on one issue and think about strategies, ideas and approaches to deal with this issue.

*Give each group one worksheet. Explain the sheets. They have 10 minutes to write down their ideas.*

Process results from each group. Highlight some key findings.

<u>Why should young people get involved?</u>			<u>Recruitment</u>		
<u>Issue</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Comments</u>
What's in it for them?	...	...	Diversity	...	...
Boring	...	...	Marginalized youth	...	...
Adults won't listen	...	...	Mixed age group	...	...
Other	...	...	Turnover	...	...
<u>Logistics</u>			<u>How do we prepare young people?</u>		
<u>Issue</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Transportation	...	...	Responsibility/		
Legal/liability	...	...	Expectations	...	...
Time/space	...	...	Training needs	...	...
			Leadership	...	...
			Other:	...	...

**Next step:** set a date for the full day training on youth adult partnerships. The goal is to have a fairly even number of youth and adults participate. Each adult has to commit to bringing at least one young person.

## **VI. Evaluations**

### ***Handouts***

2 self-assessment tools (Youth on Board, Youth activism)

Meaningful roles for young people

Roadblocks (Youth on Board)

Shep Zeldin: CYD article

Recruitment strategies

Do/Don'ts

List of resources



**APPENDIX II**  
**Creating Youth Adult Partnership**

## Training Outline

Target Audience: ACT partners, adults and young people from one county/community

Objectives:

- Participants will identify goals and skills needed to build youth adult partnerships.
- Participants will practice working together.

Facilitators: team of adults and young people (from ACT community)

### **I. Introductions -15min-**

Welcome. Introduce briefly trainers and purpose of training.

Icebreaker

Brief description of local ACT project and community plan.

### **II. Readiness for youth adult partnership -30min-**

*Separate adults and young people; youth facilitators with youth group, adult facilitators with adults. Provide newsprint.*

Adult Group (most adults will have attended organizational readiness training)

Have group review and process issues from the readiness training. Have them discuss the question: What do they need from young people to move towards youth adult partnerships? Have them select a spokesperson who will report on the group discussion.

Youth Group

Facilitate discussion on

- Why is it important to work with adults? What are the benefits?
- Why is it difficult to work with adults? Challenges?
- What do they need from adults to make youth adult partnerships work?

Have group select a spokesperson who will report out.

*Bring both groups back together.*

**Activity: First impressions (5-7 min)**

*Have adults and young people pair up; ask 5 questions (sheet).*

**Reporting out:** *Have adult and youth group share their findings. Have participants add on if things are missing. Highlight common themes.*

**III. What do we bring to the table? -30 min.-**

*Set up four stations (newsprint on the wall in different areas). Divide the group into 4 groups of youth and adults. Give each group 5 minutes to brainstorm ideas at each station, rotating clockwise.*

To start our work together, it is important to assess what our resources and needs are.

What do we all bring to the table? And what is missing?

In your groups, think about

- What skills do we have?
- What skills do we need?
- What tools/resources do we have?
- What tools/resources do we need?

*Process strengths and needs. Highlight the range of skills, surprising skills, different perceptions (some identified needs others had listed as skills or tools).*

**IV. Teambuilding -60 min.-**

Divide participants into four groups (if possible, equal number of adults and youth in each group) and introduce the challenge: All American Egg Drop.

In addition to the materials, provide each group with a sheet of group process questions.

Towards the end of the activity each group should answer and discuss these questions.

Have each group present their product. Candy awards.

Last 15 minutes: Use the group process questions as guidelines to process each work group. Highlight and summarize teambuilding strategies.

## LUNCH BREAK

### V. Practice youth adult partnerships: Community visioning -45 min-

*Form four groups. Material for each group: large newsprint, markers.*

With the ACT for Youth initiative in mind, let's envision what we want our community to look like.

#### **We would like to live in a community where...**

Together in your group draw a picture on a large piece of newsprint.

*The groups have 20-30 minutes for this activity. Then each group will present their ideal community.*

Now when we compare our ideal future community with the one we are living in right now, we find that certain things we have already, while other things we do not have.

*Process with the whole group common themes: "Have" and "need", newsprint.*

Looking at the list of "needs", we can take some of the issues listed to formulate goals/projects for our youth adult partnerships.

### VI. Moving into Action - 20-30 min.-

I would like to introduce now a concrete action planning method that can help you in your work together. This method is different because it includes everybody in the planning from the beginning (consensus building). To practice it, we will take on a concrete intergenerational project: a community talent show.

*Brainstorm. Have newsprint prepared (big circle with balloons etc).*

Let's start with: What would success look like – feel like – sound like? What would it look like when we will are done?

This is what we want to accomplish – that's the future. Now let's look at the current situation – where we are now (*prepared newsprint: circle with 4 sections: strengths, weaknesses, benefits, dangers*).

Brainstorm:

- What are our strengths?
- What are our weaknesses?
- What are the benefits?
- What are the dangers?

*Write issues in the correct sections, in the order given. Do not interpret. Move the group along.*

Looking at what we want to see in the future and what our current situation looks like, what do we think we can commit too? What should we definitely try to accomplish? What is very important to us?

*Newsprint on prepared sheet (cloud or zigzag shape). Great, now we are ready to discuss concrete steps.*

**BREAK**                      **10 min.**

***Icebreaker (10 min.)***

**VII. Action planning Phase II**                      **- 35 min.-**

Small group activity: *Form 4 groups.* We clarified our goal, our strengths, commitment, and challenges. Now let's think about the concrete action steps (not committees and workgroups) it takes to make it happen. Just brainstorm. Write actions/strategies down for yourself, then share them with your group. Decide on the six most important steps and write them down on a big piece of paper with markers. (10-15 min)

*Collect 2-3 sheets from each group and post them on sticky wall. Ask the large group if they can pair up any items. Read them aloud. Pair them up, if possible. Then try to organize larger clusters. Ask participants to add the remaining sheets, if they are different. Clarify items, groupings. Ask group if the clusters look ok to them, if they make sense.*

**Next step:** Develop a time line                      **-40 min.-**

Who wants to work on these steps? Participate in this workgroup? ( point to a cluster, write names next to it on a sheet. *Try to mix up assignments: young people and adults together in each group*).

*Post time line on sticky board: Team – start up – date – date – date – success  
(date=month)*

Go into your workgroups, collect the action steps and develop a time line for your group. Give yourselves a name, identify a start up event, organize the action steps in a timely order. Finally, what would success look like, feel like for your team. Write down team name, start up and success on a piece of paper with markers. (10-15 min)

*Have each team post their time line. Have a spokesperson for each team present their time line.*

Discussion: How do they fit together? Any adjustments? Is anything missing? How do we coordinate teams? Role of a coordinator?

*Review strengths of this method. Consensus building – shared leadership – buy in versus assignment from the top down.*

## **VIII. Evaluation**

**-15min-**

Discussion:

- Working and planning together: What worked well? What did not?
- Looking at the skills we listed in the beginning – did the list change? Did you gain skills, or did you find out that you had more skills than you listed originally? (add to the list – use different color)
- What needs to happen to continue working together – after the training?
- Possible follow up?

*Handout written evaluation.*

Handouts – please contact Jutta Dotterweich ([jd81@cornell.edu](mailto:jd81@cornell.edu)) for copies of the teambuilding and action planning activities

**APPENDIX III**  
**Youth Adult Partnership Training Energizers**

## 2 TRUTHS AND 1 LIE

*Facilitated by Jen and Martha, Erie*

Material: Small pieces of paper (6x4"), pencils, a small box

Distribute a piece of paper and a pen to all participants. Ask them to write down on one piece of paper two things that are true about them and one thing that is false. They should write down things they are willing to share with the group. Tell them not to put their name on the paper and not to discuss what they are writing down with their neighbors. When everybody is done, ask them to fold their paper, then the facilitator will go around and collect the papers using a box or container. Start by pulling out one paper. Read the three things listed and ask the group to guess who wrote this. Ask the participants whose names are mentioned to stand up. When you have 5-7 candidates standing, ask the participants who have not written these statements to sit down. Ask the group what they think the lie is. Ask the person to verify it. If the group was not able to identify the right person, ask the person to stand up. Make sure not to put the papers that were read back into the box. This activity can be continued throughout the training day, after breaks or in between longer work sessions.



## BIRTHDAYS

*Facilitated by Craig, Albany*

Find a space that allows participants to form one line. Ask participants to line up according to their birthday month/days. The challenge is that they cannot use words to communicate with each other. Designate one end as the starting point.

Once they are all lined up, ask participants to tell their birthdays.





## **MAILBOX**

*Facilitated by Mike, Otsego*

This is a good warm up activity. Ask participants to gather in a large circle. Hand out 6x4" sheets of paper, one paper per person. Ask people to put the paper on the floor and stand on it (creating a station). One person has to go in the middle (no paper) and start with " My name is\_\_ and I like \_\_ (something)", or "I like to do \_\_ (something)." Everybody who likes the same thing or agrees with the statement has to move off his/her station and find another station. They cannot use the one directly next to them. This activity will get people moving around and will help participants learn each other's names and something about each other.

*Modifications:*

Change the statement: "My name is \_\_ and I value \_\_"

This is a good activity for the afternoon: Do the same activity sitting in chairs in a circle. One person in the middle will start, "My name is... and I see people who wear something blue." Those folks have to move around to another chair. If the person in the middle calls: "Hurricane!" everybody has to move.

## **PERSONAL INTERVIEW**

*Facilitated by Angela, Onondaga*

Ask participants to pair up with another person they do not know. They have 5 minutes to interview each other. The challenge is that they have to introduce the other person to the group. Paper and pencil are not allowed. You can pose question or leave it up to the pair.

**EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:**

Name – age (if in an intergenerational group)

Occupation - Achievements in the last year?

Who are important people in your life?

What do you enjoy doing?



When the time is up, ask volunteers or the facilitators to go first.

## DEAD ANT

Facilitated by Jen, Erie

This is a good afternoon activity. Gather participants in an open area, large enough so that they can move around.

Introduce and demonstrate five group positions:

	<p><i>Dead ant</i> – everybody has to get on the floor, on their backs and wiggle arms and legs in the air.</p>
	<p><i>Tango</i> – two people have to get together and dance (tango)</p> 
	<p><i>Flashlight</i> – three people have to get together, line up one after the other. The first person has to crouch low, the second stoop down halfway and the last person remains standing. All three have to stretch out their arms forward and flash with their hands (rapidly switching from fist to spread out fingers)</p>
	<p><i>Rock band</i> – four people have to get together and imitate a music band, different instruments.</p> 
	<p><i>Politicians</i> – five people have to get together and debate loudly facing each other (including gestures).</p>

It might be helpful to draw a simple picture of each position and post them as visual cues. This is how it works: The facilitator will call positions and participants have to respond quickly finding partners to form the appropriate groupings. If they can't find a partner, they are out. The facilitator has to call out positions quickly, alternating between positions requiring odd and even numbers of participants. This exercise is very interactive, energizing and lots of fun! Naturally it requires that folks are willing to get on the floor!



## **THE PLANK**

*Facilitated by Jolene, Schenectady*

Find the person in the group with the biggest shoes. Make two parallel lines with masking tape on the floor, with the distance between them equivalent to the length of the biggest shoes in the group. Make the lines long enough that the group can stand, in a line, between the two marks. Have the group line up randomly. The task of the group is to line up, in order of height, by moving only within the space between the lines – “the plank”. If someone steps outside the lines, they fall of the plank and into the ocean!

## **TRUST ME**

*Facilitated by Angela, Cattaraugus*

Find a space large enough for all participants to form a tight circle. Ask them to make the circle tighter by all turning to the left. Everybody is looking at another person’s back. Have them place their hands on the shoulders of the person ahead of them. Then have them move closer together so that their shoe tips touch the heels of the person in front of them. It is very tight. Then ask people to bend their knees – to do it on command. When everybody is ready, tell them “Now!” The circle will balance if everybody does it at the right time. The facilitator can stand in the middle; or, if it is too tight, on the outside.

## **BIRTH MONTH CHARADES**

*Facilitated by Britiny, Jefferson*

All participants stand up and circulate around the room, looking for others who share their birth month (2-3 minutes). This should be done somewhat quietly to prevent everyone in the room from overhearing everyone else’s birth month. Group members introduce themselves to one another. Each group then develops a skit (5 minutes) that without talking demonstrates what month the members were born in (for example, fireworks for July or scary faces for Halloween in October). Groups present randomly, and other participants try to guess the month being portrayed. Participants remain in their new groups, or combine other in months closest to their own (zodiac chemistry?)..



## PICK POCKET

*Facilitated by Kylie, Jefferson*

Organize participants into groups of 5-10. Give each participant a Pick Pocket Activity Sheet. Tell groups they have 2 minutes to come up with as many items from the list as they can. Tell them that each item is worth 2 points. Explain that they may make a reasonable substitution, but if they do, that item will be worth only 1 point. For example, someone may have an Avis Preferred Renter Card rather than a Hertz #1 Gold Club Card. After 2 minutes ask groups to tally up their points. Ask groups to share what items they got from the list and what substitutions they made.

## PICK POCKET ACTIVITY SHEET

<input type="checkbox"/>	Picture of a close relative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Credit card without a signature
<input type="checkbox"/>	AAA card
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dry cleaner receipt
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grocery list
<input type="checkbox"/>	Original Social Security card
<input type="checkbox"/>	Voter registration card for a registered Democrat
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hertz #1 Club Gold Card
<input type="checkbox"/>	Buffalo nickel, wheat penny, or steel dime
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black comb
<input type="checkbox"/>	Electronic pager/beeper
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swiss army knife
<input type="checkbox"/>	Money clip
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fitness club card
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sam's Club card with photo
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coupon for any food/restaurant item
<input type="checkbox"/>	A mint
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact lens case
<input type="checkbox"/>	Matches from a restaurant in another state
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cloth handkerchief

## **ONE WORD AT A TIME**

*Facilitated by Shawna, Jefferson*

Ask for 5-10 volunteers and bring them to the front. Arrange the participants in a straight line, facing the audience. Introduce the exercise by telling the players they are going to create a story that's never been told before, and this story will be created one word at a time. Ask the observers in the room to select a title for the story the players are going to create. If there are no observers, the title can be chosen by the team of players. As titles are called out, choose the first title that you hear. As the facilitator, by taking the first suggestion for the story title, you emphasize and model the importance of accepting whatever is offered, thereby demonstrating the law of agreement. If it's a real story such as "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," ask for elaboration on the story such as "Goldilocks Retires to Florida." Give the players the following instructions: To create the story, each person will add one word at a time as the story progresses from one person to the next. After the first person says a word, the player to the right will add the second word. We will continue in this manner as each player contributes one word at a time to the story. Remember to be spontaneous with your contribution. When it is your turn to add a word, relate to the previous word in particular and the context of the story in general. Do not anticipate the story before it arrives at your spot in the line and try not to get thrown by an unexpected word. You cannot make a mistake because this story has never been told before! As people stumble over their words, and the flow of the story is halted, feel free to start new stories. Starting over does not indicate failure! Remind players to use voice inflection to indicate the ending of a sentence. Continue until at least a partial story is completed, which may be only three or four sentences. It will be evident when the group has achieved spontaneity and flow.

## **TIE MY SHOES**

*Facilitated by Terri, Cattaraugus*

This activity requires that participants wear shoes with laces. Ask participants to pair up. Have chairs lined up in a row. One person will sit on the chair; the other person will stand in front of the chair. Ask the people who are sitting to untie one shoe. Then ask the pairs to tie the shoelaces using only one hand – both people can only use one hand.



## **ALLIGATOR WAY**

*Facilitated by Eric, Rensselaer*

Material: Masking tape, 50 sheets of 8 1/2" x 11" paper.

Divide the participants into two groups and place them at opposite ends of the area behind the pieces of tape. Instruct them that the object of the activity is for each group to get to the opposite side by only walking on the floating pods (sheets of papers). However, the pods have restrictions. All pods are initially inactive until they are touched with a foot. Once a pod is active it needs to have a minimum of one foot touching it and a maximum of two feet on it. If an active pod has less than one foot on it or more than two feet on it, it is to be removed by the facilitators. Facilitators need to be ready to take away sheets of paper as the groups attempt to move from one side to the other. Give the groups two minutes for planning and then give them permission to begin.

## APPENDIX IV Youth Participation Trainings References

Community Partnerships with Youth, Inc.  
Youth in Governance  
A Board/Committee Member Curriculum  
Community Partnerships with Youth, Inc., 1994

Hampton Youth Commission  
Shaping the Future: Working Together, Changing Communities  
Hampton Coalition For Youth, 2001  
Web site: [www.altinc.org](http://www.altinc.org)

Innovation Center  
Building Community  
A Toolkit for Youth & Adults in Charting Assets and Creating Change  
Innovation Center, 2001  
Web site: [www.theinnovationcenter.org](http://www.theinnovationcenter.org)

Institute of Cultural Affairs  
Youth as Facilitative Leaders  
Technology of Participation  
Group Facilitation Methods  
Web site: [www.ica-usa.org](http://www.ica-usa.org)

Lesko, Wendy Schaetzel  
Youth Infusion. Intergenerational Advocacy Toolkit  
Activism 2000 Project, 2001  
Web site: [www.youthactivism.com](http://www.youthactivism.com)

Youth on Board  
14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making  
Somerville, MA 1999  
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Zeldin, Sheperd et al.  
Youth in Decision-Making  
A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations  
Innovation Center, a Division of National 4-H Council, 2000  
Web site: [www.fourhcouncil.edu/cyd](http://www.fourhcouncil.edu/cyd)