



Youth – Adult Retreat

August 24th & 25th, 2001

Report

ACT for Youth Upstate Center of Excellence Youth-Adult Retreat

On August 24 & 25, 2001, the Upstate Center of Excellence hosted a youth-adult retreat at the Vanderkamp Center in Cleveland, NY. The purpose of the retreat was to bring together youth and adults from all upstate ACT communities and provide them with a safe and comfortable environment to explore ways of making youth/adult partnerships work more effectively. The goal was to prepare and energize participants to engage in these partnerships in their home communities and move them forward.

The idea for the retreat came out of the youth forum in October of 2000. At the forum young people had discussed how they viewed their communities, and what they felt needed to happen to make communities better places for kids to grow up in. They also had talked about the need for adults and youth to work together to improve things in their communities. A year later we thought it was time to take a closer look at how youth and adults had worked together and how these partnerships can be strengthened.

The following report includes a description of the retreat, the planning and the lessons learned. Descriptions of activities and handouts are attached for people who are interested in using them for their work in their own communities.

Planning

The planning process started by asking youth in all ACT communities what they would like to see happening at the retreat (attachment 1: Youth Questionnaire). These comments provided material for discussion at the planning meeting held in Rochester on 8/6/01. The planning group involved members of the Youth Participation project at the Monroe County Youth Bureau, youth of the ACT initiative in Erie County, a Jefferson County 4 H educator, Upstate Center staff, and teambuilding consultant, Jim Cain. The group developed an outline for the retreat highlighting the need for creating a safe space for communication and presenting models for youth/adult interaction. The group also decided that it was important to put the retreat experience into the context of ACT for Youth. Participants needed to know how ACT fits into their work, and how they could use the experiences and activities of the retreat in their communities (attachment 2: Retreat Outline).

Recruitment

All ACT communities were asked to recruit 10 youth and adult volunteers who are actively involved in their project, or who are interest in getting involved in ACT (attachments 3-5: Retreat Brochure, Registration Form and Release). Each ACT community is using different strategies to involve youth and adult community members. Some projects have youth and family advisory groups; some have community councils or action teams. However, all groups are faced with the challenge of having youth and adults work together effectively. Youth and adults in these groups were natural recruits for the retreat .

Participants

A total of 41 youth and adults came together at the retreat: 18 teens representing 5 ACT sites and 18 adults representing 6 ACT sites. In addition, there were 5 support staff and consultants.

The youngest participant was 12 years old and the oldest retirement age. There were 26 female and 12 male participants. Rural and urban counties were evenly represented. 17 (10 teen) participants came from urban sites; 19 (8 teen) participants from rural counties.

Retreat

First Day: Getting to know each other

Participants arrived with different expectations and most likely a different understanding of ACT for Youth and youth development. The story of *Lemmingsville*, which describes in an entertaining way the history of youth development, was a starting point to get everybody on the same page. A key message of the story is that youth need to be involved in any community effort that aims to improve living conditions for young people. A brief description of the goals and structure of ACT came next (attachment 6), followed by a summary of the youth forum in October of 2000, which included ideas for joint youth-adult community.

Next, the dynamic duo, LeeAnn and Angela, took over. Initially, they worked with the group to establish positive guidelines not rules. The process of getting to know each other and getting comfortable with each other was underway with several large group exercises, most memorable *Captain's Coming* (attachment 7) and *True Colors*. It was fascinating to see how people separated into four groups according to personality and work styles.



It was even more amazing to see these newly formed groups perform a song! The next activity *Perceptions* (attachment 8) challenged participants to go a little deeper and think about the assumptions and perceptions that influence how people talk to each other.

The evening ended with the opportunity to hear from all ACT projects and learn from each other. Youth and adults from each project described some of the activities and community projects they are involved in. They also shared some of the challenges they are facing. The diversity of the group made for a very exciting discussion!

Fueled by a late snack, it was time to make new friends. For some this lasted into the early morning hours – judging from some tired faces the next day.

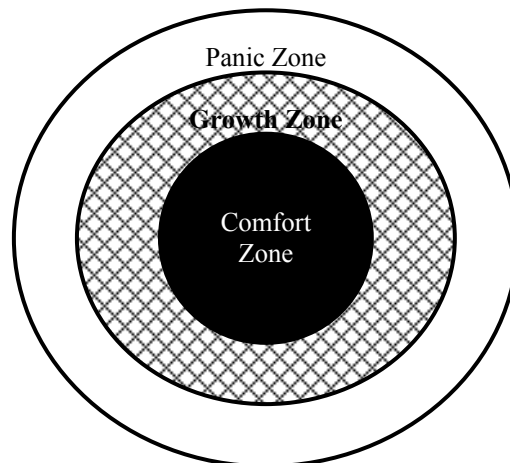
Second Day: Working Together

Jim Cain, outdoor education and teambuilding consultant, joined the retreat in the morning and immediately engaged everybody in a series of energizing, exciting communication and



teambuilding exercises. In large and small groups, participants built a statue of a women basketball player (using different length pipes and connectors), learned what people liked to eat and how much money they spent on shoes. They learned strange handshakes used by folks in Canada, Minnesota and other places. They learned to talk to each other and to interact. They learned more about each other by sorting out similarities and differences. Jim ended each exercise with recommendations on how to use the activity in their own community and shared

pitfalls to avoid. He introduced the concept of “comfort zone”. It is important to start each activity at people’s comfort zone level, then slowly push them a little further – beyond their comfort level - into the “growth zone” (see graph).



Cain J. & Joliff B. (1998). Teamwork & Teampay: A Guide to Cooperative, Challenge and Adventure Activities that Build Confidence, Cooperation, Teamwork, Creativity, Trust, Decision Making, Conflict Resolution, Resource Management, Communication, Effective Feedback, and Problem Solving Skills. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, Iowa



As the morning progressed, Jim moved on to teambuilding exercises from keeping a feather ball above the ground to collectively building a pipe structure and reflecting about the process. Participants were asked to articulate their goals for working in youth-adult groups and to think about the obstacles they might encounter.

GOALS:

- Make our skate park a cleaner, safer area*
- Make a difference with the youth in the community*
- Learn how to better communicate the asset philosophy to others*
- More activities for youth in the community*
- Get new ideas on community building and bring them back to the community*
- Hear from the young people*
- Gather creative ideas*
- To learn how to get local government and business to take a big interest in youth projects*
- Have a healthy community with caring adults and children*
- Meet new people to see what they are doing differently in their community*
- Figure out how to get youth involved in planning safe places for their use*
- Think and learn about building youth/adult partnerships in the community*
- I would like to learn new skills*
- Mingle and have fun*
- To make adults aware that teens do need them in their lives and community, and not to feel discouraged when teens stereotype them*



OBSTACLES

- Busy schedules, transportation, and ability to reach those in most need, ability to convince other adults it's necessary*
- Lack of interest, lack of people who feel it's their responsibility, lack of motivation*
- People who like to hear themselves talk*
- Communication, poverty, lack of understanding*
- Ignorant administration!*
- Getting parental involvement, listening to what others have to say, open mind*
- Personal agendas*
- Teens don't want to work with adults*
- Opportunity*
- Lack of support – adults, youth, community*
- Growing up without a stable family and turning to drugs, alcohol for the answers*
- Not coming up with the same idea than somebody else and then disagreeing with each other*
- Shy, afraid of the unfamiliar, knowledge, upbringing*
- Drugs/hate*
- Jealousy, misjudgment*
- Different negative attitudes within the adult group*
- Cops don't understand what's going on and don't really care*
- People already have cliques – closed off to them*
- Media images/stereotypes*
- Football practice, school, shopping*
- Age difference*



The team challenge continued with the *Magic Carpet* exercise (attachment 9) and the need of clear two-way *Communication* exercise (attachment 10).

After three hours of high-energy exercises it was time for food and recreation – swimming and canoeing.



In the afternoon, LeeAnn divided participants into county groups and engaged them in a community planning exercise, *Social Constitution* (attachment 11). This resulted in county plans in form of very colorful community posters. By that time quite a few participants looked rather exhausted. Therefore, the original plan to continue countywide planning in more concrete steps was abandoned. Instead, Jim Cain started the wrap up by introducing a special friend – a weather balloon of 6 feet width. Participants were sitting or lying on the floor moving the balloon around while pictures taken during the retreat were projected onto the balloon.

Great Fun! The slide show re-energized many people, and they continued the wrap up with enthusiasm in “hot tubs” where they discussed what they liked most about the retreat and what they did not like.

A final group discussion explored ways to use the strategies and techniques learned during the retreat in their home communities.



Lessons Learned

One theme was very clear. Both youth and adults stated enthusiastically that it works: Youth and adults can work together! Working together is essential, powerful, enjoyable and energizing! It takes effort, but it is worth it. One key requirement is that youth and adults have to be willing to listen to each other. Another one is

to provide youth and adults with the opportunity to spend time together in a comfortable and safe environment. The same message youth had given at the youth forum a year ago. There are not enough opportunities for youth and adults to mingle and communicate. ACT communities need to invest in and create more intergenerational activities.

“ I definitely feel that there were a lot of gaps between youth and adults filled there. Everyone just had a sense of trust when we were out there. I liked going to the Vanderkamp Center and hearing what other people were doing in their counties. I feel that I learned how to interact with adults better. The more I sat with people in my county, the more I realized they care about what is going on with youth today- and that made an impact on me.” Shannon, 16 years old, Erie County

**ACT for Youth Upstate Center of Excellence
Youth Adult Retreat August 24-25, 2001**

Purpose

The retreat will give adults and youth the opportunity to spend time together in a relaxed atmosphere, to talk and listen to each other, to get more comfortable with each other and to explore ways to work together in their communities.

Planning Questions

We are still in the planning phase for the Youth-Adult Retreat in August. We would like to hear your ideas of what should be part of this retreat to make it a great experience for both, adults and young people.

1. We will be in a casual, camp setting at the end of August. What types of activities/events would you like to see happen during the retreat (evening, daytime)?
2. What would be fun to do with a group of about 30 adults and 30 teens getting to know each other?
3. Would you like a block of time spent just with other teens? Would you like a block of time spent just with your county group?
4. Do you have an idea for a large or small group activity or game?
5. We would like to see our teens take some leadership in the retreat. Are you interested in leading groups and/or activities?
6. Which issue(s) do you feel we need to talk about which might strengthen the ACT for Youth work in the communities?
7. What would you hope to gain from this retreat?
8. Would you be interested in working with others to take pictures and write articles about the activities at the retreat?
9. Do you have any other idea of what would make this a successful and fun event?

Please give your ideas and answers to the ACT Coordinator by July 13, 2001 or email me your ideas at jd81@cornell.edu

Thanks

Jutta Dotterweich
Technical Assistance and Training Coordinator
ACT for Youth Upstate Center for Excellence

ACT for Youth

Youth Adult Retreat: August 24 & 25, 2001

Purpose: *To explore ways to form effective youth/adult partnerships.*

Participants:

Youth and adults who are or will be involved in advisory groups or community councils as part of the ACT initiative in their county. 6 ACT sites will be represented, 3 urban sites (Erie, Onondaga, Capital District) and 3 rural sites (Cattaraugus, Jefferson, Otsego). Each site will send 10 people (half teens/half adults).

Time Schedule

Friday 8/24/01 **Goal: Create a safe space, getting to know each other**

- 4-6PM** **Check-In/Lodge assignment**
Find out about expectations (have a huge paper on the dining hall wall where they can put their comments on or paint their ideas; staff will write down their expectations to model)
- Swim area open -
- 6-7PM** **Dinner (Dining Hall) – buffet style**
Song game to organize dinner lines
- 7-8PM** **Welcome – Introductions – Agenda for tomorrow**
Brief power point: What is ACT? Goals for the retreat;
outline of next day
- 8-10PM** **Group activities: Icebreakers to facilitate communication**
Positive guidelines for group
Activities: Captain’s Coming, Perceptions and/or True Colors
Last 30 minutes: refocus on youth & adults working together to improve their community; brainstorm: things/strategies they could do together in their community; ask counties to share their plans and successes
- Snacks available -
- 10-11PM** **“Getting to Know You” music, socializing etc**
Ask folks to bring their favorite music
Initial activity: Jim’s tape – group dance
End with a brief county group meeting, closure, emphasize ‘light out rule’

Saturday 8/25/01 Goal: Getting connected, learn tools and skills they can take back

7:30-8:15 Breakfast (Dining Hall)

8:30-12noon Group activities: Communication and Teambuilding
Focus on getting connected, skill building: reaching consensus, communication, teambuilding (half of the time teach skills, then second half practice) (Jim Cain)

12 – 2PM Lunch
Recreation time: volleyball, swimming (or canoeing depending on weather) fun group activities (voluntary)

2:00-3:30 County Group activity: Planning
Exercise: Social constitution, provide worksheet
Interject large group exercise: Territory/Tug of War

3:30-4:30 Wrap up/ Next Steps
Groups report out
Slide show (weather balloon)

4:30 Departure

Your Ideas...

If you have any creative ideas for retreat games and activities, would like to assist in planning the format for the retreat or are interested in facilitating a special event, please contact Jutta Dotterweich at the Upstate Center of Excellence, 607.255.4108 or e-mail: jd81@cornell.edu



**Youth—Adult
Retreat**

**Vanderkamp Center
Cleveland, NY**

**August 24th &25th,
2001**

**Youth—Adult
Retreat**

The ACT for Youth Retreat will offer youth and adults a unique opportunity to spend time together, to talk and listen to each other, to get comfortable working with each other and to explore ways in which they can work together in their communities.

The Retreat is open to youth and who are actively involved in the ACT for Youth initiative as members of family advisory councils, action teams, community councils, and as staff and program participants.

Individuals interested in bringing back information and techniques to build Youth/Adult Partnerships are encouraged to attend. Each of the participating ACT sites listed below may send ten delegates (preferably 5 adults and 5 youth from each site):

Capital District (Rensselaer, Albany, Schenectady)

Cattaraugus **Erie**
Jefferson **Onondaga**
Otsego

**Vanderkamp
Center**



Retreat participants will enjoy accommodations at the Vanderkamp Center on the North shore of Oneida Lake in Cleveland, NY.

Participants will share three lodges, each equipped with several bedrooms, bathrooms, a kitchen and a living room. All accommodations and meals are included at no charge to the participants.



Activities

As a Retreat participant, youth and adults will engage in fun, indoor/outdoor activities highlighting Teambuilding, Communications, Cooperation, and Problem Solving.

“You get more done if you’re having fun!”

There will be opportunities to socialize with folks from all counties, to play games and to explore the natural beauty of the camp, especially the lake and extensive nature and hiking trails.

**Retreat
Information**

All participants should plan on arriving at the center on Friday, August 24th by 4:00 pm and staying through Saturday, August 25th at 4:00 pm.

Registration forms and information will be sent to you in July.



Youth Adult Retreat
Registration
August 24 & 25th, 2001
YOUTH REGISTRATION

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

County: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Medical Information:

Do you have any medical conditions, which retreat staff should know about? Yes No If yes, what condition(s)? _____

Are you currently taking any medication? Yes No

If yes, what medication(s)? _____

Do you have any allergies? Yes No

If yes, list allergies: _____

Physician Information:

Name: _____ Phone: (_____)

Address: _____

Insurance Information:

Provider: _____

Group Number: _____ ID Number: _____

Parent or Guardian Information:

Name of parent(s) or guardian(s): _____

Relationship: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

Address(es): _____

Parent(s) or guardian(s) must complete the attached permission slip.

Emergency Contact: _____

Phone: _____

Alternate Phone: _____

Address: _____

Relationship to youth or family: _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Name of Staff Member Transporting Participant: _____

CDP: _____

Agency: _____

Received:

_____ **Parental Permission Slip**

_____ **Release for Pictures**

Notes: _____



**Youth Adult Retreat
Registration
August 24 & 25th, 2001**

**Authorization for
Medical
Treatment/Other**

I, _____ hereby give permission to the ACT for Youth Upstate Center staff to seek medical treatment for me in case of an emergency. I understand that staff will make a good faith effort to contact my emergency contact person if the need should arise. I understand that staff will seek medical treatment from a licensed health care provider.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

I, _____ hereby grant permission for photographs to be taken of me during the August 24-25, 2001 Youth Adult Retreat for use in ACT for Youth publications.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

What is Assets Coming Together (ACT) for Youth?

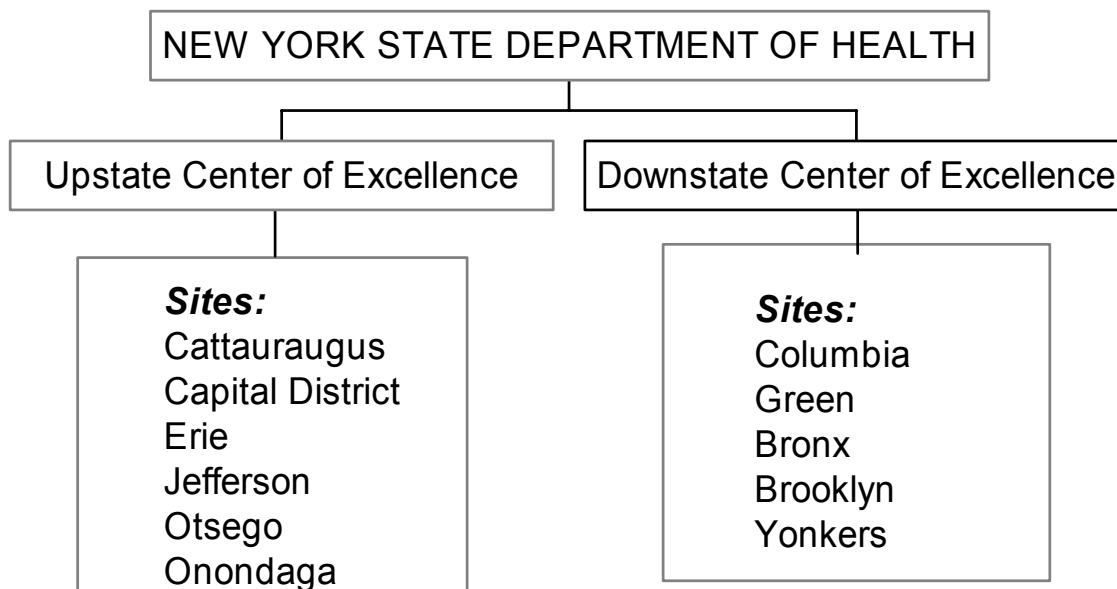
ACT for Youth is a New York State initiative that aims to promote positive youth development and to prevent abuse, violence and risky sexual behavior in young people (ages 10-19).

The ***ACT for Youth*** initiative does not concentrate on problem behaviors; instead it focuses on strengths, resources and positive outcomes. It aims to strengthen a community's ability to provide all youth with the opportunities and supports they need to grow up strong and healthy. ***ACT for Youth*** communities ask the following questions:

- ❑ What do our young people need to develop into competent, healthy and responsible adults? What knowledge, abilities and values do they need to acquire?
- ❑ What can our community do to support and help prepare our youth successfully for adulthood?

Creating an environment for young people to grow up healthy and strong requires long-term commitment from all segments of a community including its young people. ***ACT for Youth*** encourages communities to look at what they are currently doing, what they need to do differently, and what resources they have to do it. ***ACT for Youth*** fosters collaboration between all sectors of the community including groups that do not get involved with youth related activities. ***ACT for Youth*** encourages partnerships between adults and youth. ***ACT for Youth*** invites youth to be part of the process of making communities better places for young people to grow up in. Positive community change will happen when adults and youth work together as a team.

Act for Youth Structure



Principles of Positive Youth Development

ACT for Youth aims to promote positive youth development as a philosophy or approach. Reviewing the youth development literature, there is agreement about several key principles communities need to follow to provide young people with the support and the environment they need to develop to their full potential.

- ❑ ***Emphasis on positive outcomes:*** The approach highlights positive, healthy outcomes (in contrast to reducing negative outcomes such as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, violence). Although parents might have clear ideas what positive characteristics and behaviors they would like to see in their children, there is still a lack of clarity of what exactly positive outcomes are. Definitions, categories and measurements of positive outcomes are still evolving. Examples of desired youth development outcomes are competence (academic, social, vocational skills), self-confidence, connectedness (healthy relationship to community, friends, family), character (integrity, moral commitment), caring and compassion (Pittman, et al. 1996, Roth, 2000).

Example: ACT Onondaga County

The Community Partnership established a Youth Leadership Institute that offers at risk youth skill training (social, vocational) followed by an opportunity for mentoring, peer education or employment. The program aims to foster positive youth outcomes such as competencies, self-confidence and connectedness.

- ❑ ***Inclusive:*** Youth development strategies are generally aimed at all youth. Research indicates that creating supportive and enriching environments for all youth will lead to desired positive outcomes as well as the reduction or prevention of negative outcomes. However, a community-wide youth development initiative blends universal approaches with approaches that are targeting youth facing extra challenges and youth requiring immediate intervention.

Example: ACT Otsego County

The Community Partnership folded ACT into the already existing America's Promise initiative and set goals for all young people in the county following the five promises:

- *Every youth will have an ongoing relationship with a caring adult.*
- *Every youth will have a safe place to be with structured activities during non-school hours.*
- *Every youth will have a healthy start and future.*
- *Every youth will have marketable skill through effective education.*
- *Every youth will have an opportunity to give back to the community through community service.*

5 action teams of adults and youth (one for each promise) are currently identifying and planning strategies to move Otsego County towards these goals.

- ❑ ***Youth Voice:*** The emphasis on youth voice, infusion and participation shifts thinking from youth as problems to youth as resources. It is essential to include youth as active participants in any youth development initiative. Youth participation can take different shapes – from youth expressing their views to youth assisting in program planning and

implementation to youth sitting on decision-making boards. Independent of the level of youth involvement, youth participation presents a great challenge to adults by charging them to rethink how they have engaged in planning, program development and implementation.

Example: ACT Erie County

The Community partnership adopted the asset-building model to promote positive youth development. As part of that strategy, the partnership recruited several young people to participate in the development of a media campaign to educate the general public about assets and asset development. Youth participation is essential to this effort.

- **Emphasis on longevity:** Youth development assumes long-term commitment. Activities and supportive relationships have to endure for a long period of time to be effective. They have to accompany youth throughout their development. While short-term positive results may be seen and should be built on, positive community-based, youth outcomes may not be measurable for 15-20 years. Consequently, planning of youth development strategies needs to include thinking about how to sustain these efforts.

Example: ACT Cattaraugus County

The Community Partnership built on an existing countywide coalition of public and private agencies, the Integrated County Planning initiative (ICP), and used existing cooperative relationships and structures to create four family resource centers. The centers are housed in schools. Programming and services are provided by member agencies of the Community Partnership. Cattaraugus is using available community resources as a strategy to ensure that this effort can be sustained for a longer period of time and is thus less vulnerable to short-term funding cycles.

- **Community involvement:** Youth development stresses the importance of engaging the larger social environment that influences how young people grow up and develop. This includes family and friends, but also the community they live in. Community is more than social service and youth organizations, schools, law enforcement agencies; it involves business, faith and civic groups, and private citizens who are not attached to any organization.

Currently there are two popular, researched community organizing models, Search Institute's Asset Building and Communities that Care, that provide strategies and tools to involve large sectors of the community in the task of making the community a better place for young people to grow up in.

Example: ACT Jefferson County

The Community Partnership has chosen Search's asset building approach to promote positive youth development. Using grass roots organizing techniques, the partnership recruited local residents and teens to form community councils in two small rural communities. These councils are charged to do a needs and resource assessment for their community and to develop strategies and activities to build assets. Currently, the Partnership is working towards forming additional community councils. Once councils are formed in all regions of the county, representatives of all community councils will create a county council charged with planning countywide asset building strategies. This

ACT initiative is reaching beyond public and private service provider; it involves parents and sectors frequently not included such as business and the faith community.

- ***Emphasis on collaboration:*** Not one agency or service system is able to provide all the support young people and their families need to achieve positive outcomes. Youth development requires inter-agency and cross-system collaboration. It brings together people from public and private agencies and community groups to form a partnership. Positive youth development provides the common goal, the vision and the common language that set the stage for community-wide collaboration.

Example: ACT Capital District (Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady)

Collaboration is of central importance to this partnership, faced with the challenge of planning and implementing youth development strategies for a three county area. The Partnership developed a two-layered organizational structure forming a steering committee of representatives of the lead agency for the project and lead agency for each county. On the lower level, each county has formed a partnership of private and public community agencies. Regular communication patterns, joint planning, clear goals and vision, definition of roles and responsibilities have been critical components to make the collaborative initiative work.

CAPTAIN'S COMING

Captain's Coming is a large group activity!
This activity is a verbal, physical and mental game for people of all ages.
This is known as the college level Simon-Says.
Everyone is in a large group. When the facilitator calls "Captain's Coming!" each person must salute the Captain!
Here is the list of commands with descriptions.

The only way anyone can move with a command is if they are "At Ease".
This command is when everyone has their hands at their side.
If everyone has their hands at their side, they may go on with the command and do what the Captain commands them to do.
If anyone moves when they are still at salute, they are out.
If they are the only one left without partners at anytime during a group command, they are out.

Captain's Coming - salute
At ease - hands at side
Swab the deck - mopping the floor
Sea Sick - pretend to vomit
Mermaids - stand on one foot and say "hi sailors" while waving
Sailors - stand with hands on hips while saying "hi mermaids"
Ship - swim to the left
Ship Wreck - Everyone jumps up and down
Island - swim to the right
Whirl Wind - spin in circle with hands out saying "woooooo"
Overboard - One person gets on hands and knees, while partners put one knee on the back of the person on the ground
Crow's Nest - Three people lock arms standing back-to-back
Captain's Table - Five people squat in a circle facing each other, pretending they are eating food

Captain's Coming!!!!

Perceptions

Materials Needed: 10 envelopes (1 for each member) that contain pictures; red, green and yellow circles labeled negative, positive, and neutral respectively.

Outline of Activity

Place the red, green and yellow circles on the floor in the center of the group. Pass an envelope to each member and tell the group not to open the envelope until directed to do so. Explain the meaning of the colored circles [*the feeling zones*]. Yellow represents neutral feelings, red represents bad feelings and green represents good feelings. Direct the group members to silently open their envelopes and place the pictures next to the circle, which best describes their first reaction. Then ask the participants to explain their thinking on why they put their pictures where they did. Next, ask the participants to partners-up and make a shared decision to move one photo to a different "feeling zone". Finally, pick out one of the pictures from next to the green (good feeling zone) circle and give some negative information about it. Then ask the person who put it next to the green circle whether or not they'd like to move it. Do the same with the red (bad feeling zone) circle and give some really positive information about it.

Expected Outcomes

To understand the *Perceived World* and how our perceptions motivate our behavior/decisions.

How to Process

Ask:

- Where do perceptions come from?
- How do we decide what value to place on them?
- How do perceptions change?
- Can we control our perceptions?
- When would it be helpful to change your perception of something or someone?

Activity: Magic Carpet

Magic Carpet requires a minimal amount of equipment and provides a challenging initiative to solve.

Equipment: The Magic Carpet consists of a single piece of tarp or plastic cloth. Other options include a plastic shower curtain, plastic tablecloth, or blanket. For groups of 8-12 participants, the Magic Carpet should be approximately 4 feet by 5 feet.

The Challenge: To turn the Magic Carpet over, without touching the ground surrounding the Magic Carpet.

Typical Introduction: Place Magic Carpets on the ground within a couple of feet of each other. Your group is on a Magic Carpet ride, high above the fields of the surrounding countryside. You suddenly realize that you are going the wrong direction, because the carpet you are riding on is in fact, upside-down! Since you are no longer touching the ground, you must turn the carpet over, without stepping off the carpet. For safety reasons, you are not allowed to lift or carry other participants.

Facilitation: Give groups a few minutes to work on the challenge. If groups stay separate from each other and try to resolve the task independently from each other, interrupt and state that the instructions did not say that groups could not talk to each other. Process after all groups are done.

Discussion: Have participants share their observations. The question how the statement that they could talk to other groups has changed their problem solving can lead to an interesting discussion about agency/group boundaries and collaboration. Other processing questions could address leadership and roles within the group.

Activity: Communication

Objective: Participants will learn that the information exchange between several people is greatly influenced by participants' perceptions and attitudes resulting in message changes.

Material: newspaper, markers, pens, and blank index cards

Set-up: Divide group into small groups of 4. Arrange columns of 4 chairs - each column: one chair behind the other in a straight line with enough space between chairs to allow participants to sit down.

Instructions: Ask participants to sit in the chairs. Each column represents one team that will work together. Participants in the front row will receive blank index cards and a pen. The task is as follows: Participants in the back row will come forward and will be shown a simple drawing. They will go back to their seats. When given a sign, they will draw that picture with a finger on the back of the person in front of them. That person in turn will draw the picture on the person in front of them and so forth. The person in front will draw the picture on the index card. Participants are not allowed to give any verbal clues about the picture they are drawing. There is a time limit: Each group has a couple of minutes to transfer the picture from the last row to the front. When everybody is done, the participants in the front row will hold up their drawing; the facilitator will show the original drawing.

Have the participants in the front row move back one seat and the participants in the back row will come to the front. Repeat exercise with different, slight more complex drawings until all participants have had a chance to be the sender and the receiver of the message.

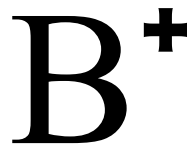
Drawing samples:



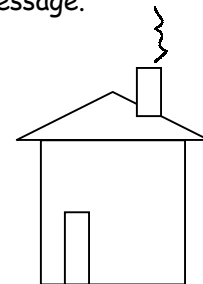
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Discussion: Invite participants to share their observations. Stress that messages get changed from sender to receiver due to participants' attitudes, perceptions. Example: B+ drawing is confusing for many, but easier to draw for teachers because they identify and interpret it immediately as part of their grading system. The symbol has meaning for them; it makes sense.

The exercise can be extended, by asking participants - in their small groups - to share examples of miscommunications they encountered in their work. Groups can then report to the larger group.

Social Constitution

Materials Needed: Poster board, markers, construction paper, scissors and tape

Outline of activity

The facilitator tells the group (seated in a circle) that they will be sharing common living space for the remainder of the retreat. Ask if they think it would be important to create a social constitution that will become the group's identity and will help them work together respectfully. When the group agrees that this is a good plan, instruct them to do the following:

- Create a list of the ATTITUDES and general BEHAVIORS you WANT and those you DO NOT WANT from the people around you when you are learning something new. Initially, you can brainstorm by including all ideas.
- Create a MODEL LIVING SPACE on the poster board with markers and/or construction paper (i.e. classroom, community, building, boat, island, castle, planet, etc.). Encourage CREATIVITY!
- Place the symbols for the behaviors you DO WANT INSIDE the Living Space and those you DO NOT WANT OUTSIDE. Everyone must agree upon 5-7 fundamental ethical principals and make a personal commitment to promote the constitution.
- Encourage EVERYONE to contribute to the list and the drawing.
- Once a Social Constitution is artistically represented on the poster board, then the group should begin planning for a brief skit that introduces their family group's new living space/identity.

Expected Outcomes:

To begin building group cohesion and identity through a safe process of shared decision making.

How to Process:

Discuss each person's values as they relate to this social constitution and the "real" school community by asking the following questions:

- How did the group arrive at the norms and values for their new living space? What is a value?
- Does the Social Constitution reflect individual values?
- Which of these values make for a strong community? Strong leaders?
- Is there a connection between strong communities and leaders?