



Toolkit of Action Ideas

This toolkit provides you with the resources necessary to make a difference in your community as well as our Wisconsin.

2009

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What is Wisconsin Youth Voice?

Wisconsin Youth Voice (WYV) is made up of young people and adults who believe in youth voice and youth action -- let's increase youth voice in Wisconsin!

Youth Voice Strategic Plan:

Vision:

Young people in Wisconsin are regularly, appropriately and effectively engaged in sharing their voices in civic affairs at local and state levels.

Mission:

Advancing youth as valued leaders and contributors within Wisconsin communities, schools and government.

Goal Statements:

1. Increase the number of community forums, spaces and public opportunities that include youth perspectives and ideas.
2. Make sure there are rules and policies that guarantee youth voice at state and local levels and resources to back them up.
3. Increase the number of organizations that are capable of engaging youth within their own organizations and in their communities, schools and governments.



Tactics for Change

This list of events, activities, and other action ideas are great to start with when you get back to your community to start promoting Wisconsin Youth Voice.

“Map” youth voice opportunities in your area – find gaps and fill them in

“Mapping” means to record or document true facts and information in an organized way.

What’s good about “mapping” youth voice opportunities?

Mapping gives you solid information (that you will present to community leaders) about existing opportunities for youth to express ideas, opinions and actions about important issues.

But what good does mapping and presenting this information do?

- It shows you are serious about youth voice
- It can open the door to talking with leaders about the importance of youth voice
- It helps you and other leaders see how much or how little youth voice is really happening
- It gives you and other leaders a place to start, a way to figure out where youth voice opportunities could be developed, even what youth voice things could be connected – get people talking about youth voice!

How do we “map” youth voice opportunities?

1. Create a list of things you want to know about youth voice opportunities in your area, such as *what organizations have youth on boards or committees? What government boards and agencies ask for youth input? How often do they ask for it? What do they do with the information they get from youth?*

Then make up a questionnaire and a list of all the places in your area that you think could/should have youth input, opinions and assistance. Get trained to ask questions correctly and be safe during surveying. Work in teams to visit places and ask them your

questions—be sure to write down all the answers, or have people complete a checklist. Then compile your results and see what you've got!

2. You can also check out some places in the U.S. that do youth or community “mapping”:

A very good, simple guide for mapping youth voice is at :
<http://www.tapartnership.org/docs/communityMappingYouth.pdf>

An extensive process for mapping youth activities is at:
www.communityyouthmapping.org (Note: this group maps youth *activities*, but you would want to make it specific to *youth voice opportunities*)

There is a simple format to get your group thinking about youth voice at:
<http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/files/doc/A2/YAPTM%20pp%2087%20Mapping%20Youth-Adult%20Partnerships.pdf> You could expand this by using their questions and handout, but instead of just thinking about various groups and clubs, actually go visit them with a full list of questions.

There is even new software to help map youth opportunities in larger, urban areas. Check out: <http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/Newsletter/v5.i3.3.pdf>

Do informal advocacy and “guerrilla marketing”

“**Guerrilla marketing**” refers to doing inexpensive, creative, surprising things in public that are legal and *educational*, but well.....surprising!! Check out http://www.fightwithfact.com/fact_in_action.php for some picture and examples in Wisconsin to fight corporate tobacco.

For example, if you're doing guerrilla marketing, you might make a human billboard that says “Start talking with us *before* we start drinking” or “Big Tobacco Lies” or “Keep bus fares affordable” or any other message you're trying to get across.

Another example is handing out small cards with important but little known facts to passersby. Or you can write a message in an aluminum fence by using plastic cups to spell out words (stick the cups into the fence holes!).

Another idea is to have a place at the mall or in a busy location where you give out stickers or buttons. Maybe you're wearing a sandwich board with your message, or there is an unusual display or other sort of striking visual that draws people to your area.

“Informal advocacy” means speaking up for what you think is important in small groups of friends, family, neighbors – helping to educate others and spread the word about your message. Or you can talk individually with lots of different people – hand them a card that has a few important facts and tell them what you believe. Then move on. Remember that advocacy often works like drops of water falling on a stone. It might take a lot of drops, but it will eventually leave a mark

Have a community roundtable, panel about youth voice, or town hall meeting

Sometimes these events can also include a meal and might be called a community or town supper. They take a little time to plan and you'll need to invite people with letters, flyers, and personal contacts. But what you get is a group of people ready to listen.

There are several web links with information to help you organize this type of event. Most of these links give information about a specific topic that is discussed at a community roundtable (such as child safety, alcohol and other drugs, etc.) but you can use the same organizing information for *any topic*.

Holding a Community Roundtable – 13 page guide

<http://collaborationdc.net/Documents/CDC%20-%20CommunityRoundtableGuide.pdf>

How to Plan a Town Hall Meeting – 3 page overview

http://www.take25.org/res/pdf/how_to_plan_a_townhall_meeting.pdf

Smart and Sober Town Hall Meeting Online Toolkit – complete online toolkit with sample agenda, timeline, handouts and promotional materials.

<http://www.ebasedprevention.org/toolbox/smart-and-sober>

Have a youth voice party

This is a great way to get your community members involved in a fun and informal atmosphere. Sit down with your friends and plan a party based around youth voice. “The sky is the limit,” when planning a party. Make the theme “Wisconsin Youth Voice.” Listed below are a few tips that you might think about while planning the party:

- 1) Decide where you want to host your party. The easiest is to plan it at someone’s house. Make sure if it is a youth’s house that the parents are aware of the party and it might be necessary to have the parents present during the party. Think about the atmosphere of the environment. Is this a good place to have a youth voice party?
- 2) Start making a list of people you want to invite that would be interested in attending an informal party about youth voice. It is recommended that you also invite adults from the community that hold a strong liking to this issue or would like to learn more.
- 3) Start getting together everything you need for the party. If you have a budget- prioritize! Making posters to display the benefits of youth voice or draw the Wisconsin Youth Voice logo on party items like the cups. This is a non expensive way to theme your party.
- 4) Having food at a party always makes people stay longer and enjoy their time more. If you have a small budget suggest the party be “pot luck” where it is suggested that when you attend the party you would bring a dish to pass. This way there could be a lot of food.
- 5) Play games! Create games that get people talking about youth voice.
- 6) After you plan the party, enjoy your time and start making a difference in your community.

Other ideas

1. Enact a new youth voice policy
2. Meet with local elected officials and state legislators
3. Join the Wisconsin Youth Voice movement
4. Become a fan of the Wisconsin Youth Voice Facebook page
5. Enlist the voices of local organizations and youth on the youth voice policy briefs.

6. Hold a town hall meeting about youth voice
7. Ask stakeholders what youth voice means to them; discuss what means to them is
8. Talk to school leaders (district administrators and principals) to distribute youth voice information to school staff
9. Interview people on the street to make local videos about youth voice
10. Host a discussion or gathering at your house about youth voice
11. Have a youth Voice open microphone night
12. Have a youth voice rally



What will you do?

Brainstorm a few ideas!

Brainstorming: After identifying a problem you and your team want to solve, start brainstorming. This is a creative group activity that generates as many ideas as possible. The rules are that everyone needs to contribute, every idea is written down, and no ideas can be criticized.

BRAINSTORMING WORKSHEET

Questions to ask your team to get you thinking:

- What did we learn at the Youth as Partners in Civic Leadership conference?
- How can what we learned be applied to our community/school/organization?
- What are some places in your community that could benefit from youth involvement and where youth would be willing to contribute their voices?

STEP 1: What problem are you going to work to solve?

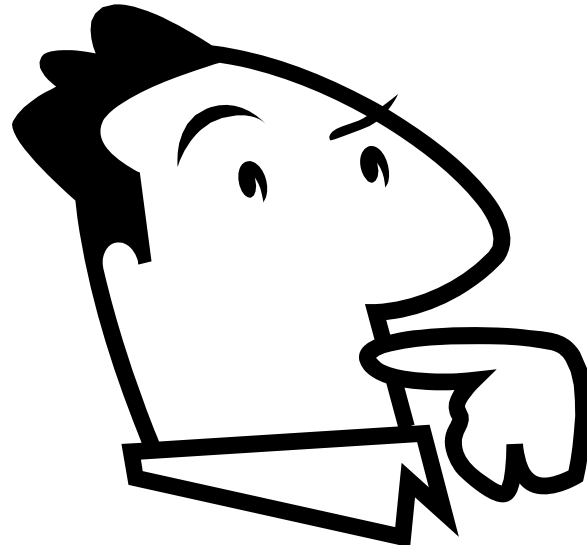
STEP 2: BRAINSTORM – set a goal for the minimum number of ideas you want, example 30. Pick a facilitator to write ideas down as all participants shout out solutions. Laughing is encourage! Criticism is not.

Wisconsin Youth Voice Toolkit of Action Ideas, 2009. Download from www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/yig/2009YPCLConferenceInformation.cfm

STEP 3: Select your five best ways to address/solve the problem.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

STEP 4: Rank these five ideas based on criteria important to your group: example, includes the most youth voice in all levels, cost effective, fun, etc. Give each idea a ranking 0-5 on how the each meet each of these criteria. Whichever idea has the highest score is your new task! Make sure to keep your brainstorming lists in case you need new ideas again.



Start working with people!

People to help you when you get back home:

- Art, Music and Shop Teachers (or whoever your favorite teachers are!)
- Radio and Cable Access TV personnel
- Staff of your local youth organizations
- Parents, Pastors and other adults who like working with youth
- Volunteers or staff of organizations that work for positive change (in health, violence prevention, politics, the environment, or any other issue)

People around the state you can turn to:

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Youth and Adults Working Together

Take a look at what some youth and adults are saying about youth voice!

“Being a member on an adult coalition, I was able give a youth’s perspective into issues of underage drinking and drug use. Sitting next to the sheriff and assistant district attorney was a great experience. If you show the adults and other youth your passion for your issue, then your team can achieve a greater success.” –Taylor Putz, Youth Specialist for the Drug Free Communities Task Force and Fond du Lac School District

“Working with adults can be really fun, but can also a bit difficult. Adults actually value the opinions of youth and are willing to listen to them, but when it comes to trying to understand what an adult is saying, it can be hard. My advice is to not be afraid of asking questions while working with adults; they won’t look down at you at all.” -Kevante Monette, Focus on Community, Racine

"Working with youth has always been my favorite part of my job. Youth provide a perspective on life that adults age out of. My advice to other adults who work with youth would be to take youth seriously, while maintaining your sense of humor. Because a lot of youth are less guarded, they tend to have great input and ideas about what we are *all* trying to accomplish...and they are a lot of fun!!!" -Chris Christensen, Fond du Lac School District/Drug Free Communities Task Force

“Whether in the classroom, providing student services to college aged youth, or working with teens, I seek to collaborate with youth as much as possible. I believe that young people bring a level of dynamism and creativity to any space that they are a part of. In many situations, we adults feel we know what youth need when youth themselves know what

they need and we forget to enlist their voices in the process of innovation around youth development. I seek to view young people as my colleagues and partners in any process in which they are involved. Mutual respect and an attitude of partnership and equity seems to facilitate a productive environment.” - K. Byer, University of Wisconsin-Madison

“From my experience working with adults when I was younger and now transitioning to being an adult myself, I find that we all be more accomplished when we treat each other as partners. Shared decision-making, shared responsibility, and shared recognition lead to better outcomes than when done alone. Each person has something to contribute.” - Ashley Viste, 4-H Volunteer and Alumni

“I have had the pleasure of working with youth for many years and am always amazed at their honesty, openness and perspective of the world. As adults we need to continue to work together with our youth to build a tomorrow that is better for everyone. Youth are the leaders of tomorrow and the future.” - Janet Lloyd, RN- Fond du Lac School District-Drug Free Communities Task Force

"For most people, youth and adults working together successfully takes some time to get to know each other. This helps to dispel myths or stereotypes and builds trust. Also, try to avoid situations where youth have "token" voice; where their perspectives and input are considered "nice" and "good for youth" but may not be taken seriously by the adults. Give both adults and youth the opportunity to grow into their partnership by providing training, support, and encouragement to really listen to each other and learn each other's points of view." – Sue Allen, Youth Development and Prevention Specialist, UWEX Family Living Educator, Marquette County

Tips for Youth Adult Partnerships

Adapted from The Free Child Project, Olympia, Washington. Found online at <http://www.freechild.org/YAPtips.htm>

The following can help YOU create lasting and sustainable Youth-Adult Partnerships.

1. Know Thyself.

When youth and adults work together, we must face some key questions about ourselves: Do I appreciate different perspectives? What stereotypes do I have about others? Do I judge people based on their clothes rather than their abilities? Why should I be open to working with youth/adults? Adults and young people must be willing to honestly address their stereotypes and preconceptions to work together effectively.

2. Speak By Listening.

All people, regardless of age, have the potential to be both teachers and students. Unfortunately, we are often too pressed for time, overly task-oriented, or limited by traditional roles, so we neglect to *really* communicate with one another. Young people must take a stand for positive change and demand that their voices be heard. Adults should step up and listen – really listen – to the concerns of young people.

3. Make It Meaningful.

All people - youth & adults - need to feel that they are contributing to their communities. Young people and adults can work together to create meaningful and challenging opportunities to change our communities. Respect both youth and adults, by thinking about schedules, transportation needs, and other commitments when planning meetings and gatherings. And don't forget to recognize everyone's efforts!

4. Spread the Wealth.

Young people, when involved in the decision-making that will affect their lives, grow more capable, responsible, and trusting of adults. By working with young people,

adults become more energized, creative, and insightful. Adults and youth who recognize the benefits of working together are great ambassadors to their own peer groups. Spread the work – youth and adults who work as allies develop a broader base of support and build stronger communities.

5. Check Yourself.

Read through these questions and ask yourself if you're really ready to create partnerships with young people? Young people, are you really ready to work *with* adults?

- DO I respect and value the opinions of others no matter how old they are?
- DO I seek to involve a diverse group of people in my programs and projects?
- WHAT IS my motivation for working with youth/adults?
- DO I expect one person to represent the opinions of all youth or all adults?
- AM I willing to let go of some of my own control in order to share responsibility?
- WHY DO I want to work with adults/youth?

WHAT CAN ADULTS DO?

From YAC Tracks: A Step-By-Step Guide for Organizing Community Action Coalitions – the Kansas Office for Community Service and the Points of Light Foundation, 1995

- Offer moral support, encouragement, and a little bit of wisdom- with restraint
- Help make connections with other supportive adults in the community
- Recruit young people to help recruit other young people
- Provide a telephone, copier, fax machine, computers, etc.
- Supervise events
- Share wisdom and experience
- Allow young people to find the answers and make mistakes
- Make sure that activities are safe and appropriate
- Provide training
- Help locate funding sources
- Provide transportation to projects, community organizations or other locations
- Communicate with parents

From YAC Tracks: A Step-By-Step Guide for Organizing Community Action Coalitions – the Kansas Office for Community Service and the Points of Light Foundation, 1995

WHAT CAN YOUTH DO?

Developed by Advocates for Youth's Peer Educators with assistance from the Young Women's Project, Washington, DC. Found online at

http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=681&itemid=177

Most adults have good intentions. Remember that they are seldom accustomed to working in partnership with young people.

Criticism doesn't necessarily mean condescension or that an adult doesn't value your contribution. It may mean the adult is treating you the same way he/she would an adult colleague. Remember that adults are used to critiquing each other's work and offering constructive ideas to improve a project. Disagreement doesn't mean disrespect.

Adults may not be aware of the capabilities of young people. You may have to show them.

Adults often feel responsible for the success or failure of the project. This makes it hard for them to share power. Reassure them that you will share in successes and failures.

Adults are just as uncertain as youth. Many have just learned to disguise it better.

Sometimes adults use phrases and expressions, whether consciously or not, that annoy young people and that indicate they aren't treating youth as partners. These phrases and expressions can erode a relationship. Be prepared to call adults on their language.

Don't be afraid to ask for clarification. Adults often use words, phrases, and acronyms that you might not understand. Adults new to the program may not understand them either. The language of a special issue, like HIV, is riddled with terms that can bewilder any newcomer.

Don't be afraid to say, "No." Adults will understand that you have other important commitments, like your education, family, friends, hobbies, and sports.

6. Take Practical Steps.

- Build a team of young people and adults working together with a common purpose
- Respect is essential: without basic respect and trust, youth leadership cannot help
- Back up young leaders with care and support... young people lack the experience to know that a failure is not the end of the world: they need encouragement and support to learn from mistakes
- Structure opportunities for reflection through writing and discussion: a key factor in effective leadership is the ability to learn from experiences and to apply them
- Utilize program veterans or older peers in training roles

- Avoid tokenism: one or two students on a board may be intimidated or feel inadequate representing all their peers
- Establish and maintain accountability
- Set responsibilities at appropriate levels – too high: failure is guaranteed; too low: you insult their intelligence and risk boring them.
- Involve young people in the process of delegating responsibilities
- Model the behaviors you expect from youth leaders
- Listen to each other!
- Have fun!

Based on information from The Generator, Fall 1992, p. 24, The National Youth Leadership Council, Minneapolis, MN

7. Take a Look Inside.

"Ultimately, we all have to ask ourselves "What is the purpose of youth-adult partnerships?" If we answer that we honesty and integrity, we may find that there are great motivations for this action. We may also discover that we have ulterior motives that aren't so great. Either way, the moral of the story is that we have to be sincere in our desire to engage in partnerships, or else they are bound to fail. Meet the task. Make change now.

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Getting to know your government

Here is an online way to contact your national Congress people and Senators!

Want to contact your national elected officials (Congress people and Senators)? Here's an awesome easy way to do it. Capwiz lets you write your message, and then delivers it for you! Go to the Capwiz site (see URL below), compose your own message on any issue of your choice, and enter your home information. Capwiz finds the right people to send it to. It's that easy.....

<http://capwiz.com/yo-demo/officials/congress/?state=&lvl=C&azip=54473>