

YOUTH VOICE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: WHY IT MATTERS

WHY IS YOUTH VOICE IMPORTANT?

- BUILDS A SENSE OF BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY (ZELDIN, 2004)
- STRENGTHENS SELF-CONFIDENCE (SERIDO ET AL., 2011)
- CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT (WRAY-LAKE & SYVERTSEN, 2011)
- CONTRIBUTES TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING (BALLARD ET AL., 2018)
- INCREASES CAPACITIES FOR CIVIC ACTION (LERNER ET AL., 2014)



PICTURE 1

“People should stop this violence... somebody that has to step up, that has to speak out for it. If you ever see something that is going on, don't be afraid to speak, speak up because they might be able to hear you when you do speak.”- Black male, age 17, Youth Voice Study

WHAT IS YOUTH VOICE?

- DECISION MAKING POWER
- STANDING UP FOR OTHERS
- EXPRESSING OPINIONS
- EMPOWERMENT
- FEELING HEARD
- SPEAKING UP
- LEADERSHIP
- AGENCY



PICTURE 2

YOUTH HAVE A **RIGHT** TO BE HEARD.

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified a resolution in 1989 that affirmed the **RIGHTS** of children to exercise their voice.
- Article 12 “States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child.”
- Article 13 “The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.”

WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

ACTIONS

- Activism
- Community service
- Political campaign involvement
- Environmental actions
- Community organization
- Informal helping behavior

KNOWLEDGE

- Following the news
- Knowledge of political processes
- Understanding root causes of social problems
- Knowledge of how to make change

VALUES & ATTITUDES

- Social responsibility
- Political interest
- Political and social views

SUPPORTS YOUTH LOOK FOR FROM SPECIFIC ADULTS

PARENT SUPPORTS

- Giving youth decision making opportunities
- Showing up
- Providing protection and safety

TEACHER SUPPORTS

- Building personal relationships
- Believing in youth
- Focusing on student-centered learning

YOUTH PROGRAM STAFF

- Offering opportunities for engagement
- Encouraging youth with positive messages
- Giving second chances

"When kids have an idea don't like brush it off. If they have something to say, really listen and they really are like passionate or they like really wanna do it, try to help them as much as you can. Because if like you shoot them down when they're young then this just not gonna get any better like as they get older. It's not gonna encourage them to continue to think outside the box or wanna help." - Black female, age 18, Youth Voice Study

WHAT NOT TO DO.

- AVOID SERIOUS CONVERSATIONS
- STEREOTYPE OR JUDGE
- PRETEND TO LISTEN
- IGNORE
- INTERRUPT
- DISMISS
- DISRESPECT
- YELL

FROM YOUTH'S OWN PERSPECTIVES:



PICTURE 3

WHAT ADULTS CAN DO TO FOSTER YOUTH VOICE

- SHOW RESPECT
- SHOW GENUINE INTEREST
- BRING YOUTH INTO CONVERSATIONS
- MAKE USE OF YOUTH'S SUGGESTIONS
- BELIEVE YOUTH
- BELIEVE IN YOUTH
- CREATE SAFE SPACES

REFERENCES

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- Zeldin, S. (2004). Preventing youth violence through the promotion of community engagement and membership. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 32, 623-641.

PHOTOS

Picture 1 retrieved from <https://www.politicususa.com/2018/03/14/in-pictures-walkout-day.html>

Picture 2 retrieved from <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/protesters-gather-world-support-daca-gallery>

Picture 3 retrieved from <http://pixshark.com/black-lives-matter-tumblr.htm>