



The Students Commission

lead of the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement



Models for Engaging Child and Youth Voices

*Bringing Children in from the Margins:
Symposium on Child Rights Impact Assessment
May 14-15, 2013 Ottawa*



**I'd rather be the
program than the
reason for the
program.**





The rationale for youth engagement in governance and decision-making often begins with a focus on human rights

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

"[Countries] 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, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." (Article 12)

"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. (Article 13)



Why Involve Young People in Policy and Program Development?

Scholars have identified three common rationales or initiating factors to engage youth in governance (Zeldin et al., 2003):

1. A rights-based approach - ensuring social justice and youth representation in decision making (UNCRC)
2. Youth Development Opportunity – involving youth in governance is a way for young people to actively participate in their own learning and healthy development.
3. To Develop Civil Society - communities work better with diverse stakeholders that bring various valuable perspectives and competencies



Pourquoi engager les jeunes dans l'élaboration de politiques et de programme?

Les universitaires ont identifié trois raisonnements communs ou facteurs introductifs qui engagent les jeunes dans la gouvernance (Zeldin et al., 2003):

1. Une approche fondée sur les droits – assurant la justice sociales et une représentation des jeunes dans la prise de décisions (CIDE)
2. Une chance pour les jeunes de se développer – engager les jeunes dans la gouvernance est une façon pour eux de participer à leur propre apprentissage et développement, d'une façon saine.
3. Créer une société civile – les communautés travaillent mieux quand les parties sont diversifiées et apportent des compétences et des points de vue variés.





Centre of Excellence Youth Engagement Definition



Youth Engagement is the meaningful participation and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity, with a focus outside of the self. It has cognitive (head), affective (heart), behavioural (feet) and spiritual (spirit/connectedness) aspects. Participation is the simple act of showing up; engagement occurs when head, heart, feet and spirit are involved.

Cadre du Centre d'excellence pour l'engagement des jeunes

Le CEEJ définit l'engagement des jeunes comme la participation significative et l'implication soutenue d'une jeune personne à une activité tout en s'ouvrant sur le monde. Cet engagement revêt des aspects cognitifs (tête), affectifs (coeur) et comportementaux (pieds) et spirituels (esprit/connectivité). La participation est l'acte simple d'être présent; il se produit quand la tête, le cœur, les pieds et l'esprit sont actifs.





Decision Making Continuum

- Informed, reflective decisions for myself
- Informed, reflective, shared decisions with family and peers
- Informed, shared, informal decisions within programs: my ideas count
- Informal and formal advisory, consulting groups, opportunities
- Formal governance structures



Young Decision Makers

Discussing Issues

- Materials for young people to inform others.
- Space for exploring and communicating ideas.

Studying Issues

- Identifying the issues.
- Gathering research: Our own experience, others, science.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH CONSTITUENCY BUILDING

WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION

Action: Child and Youth Programs

- Supporting government / business initiatives.
- Youth-led projects that address issues.

Decision Making

- YDM Consensus on topic.
- What is our voice to others?

Inform Policy Makers

- Policy recommendations to governments, businesses and youth organizations.
- Reporting responses back to members.

SUPPORTS

LEGEND

- Completed
- Underway
- Not started

Project Description

Brief Description.



ADULT YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

a new public idea



The evolution of an idea

**help, support, coach, mentor
to partner**

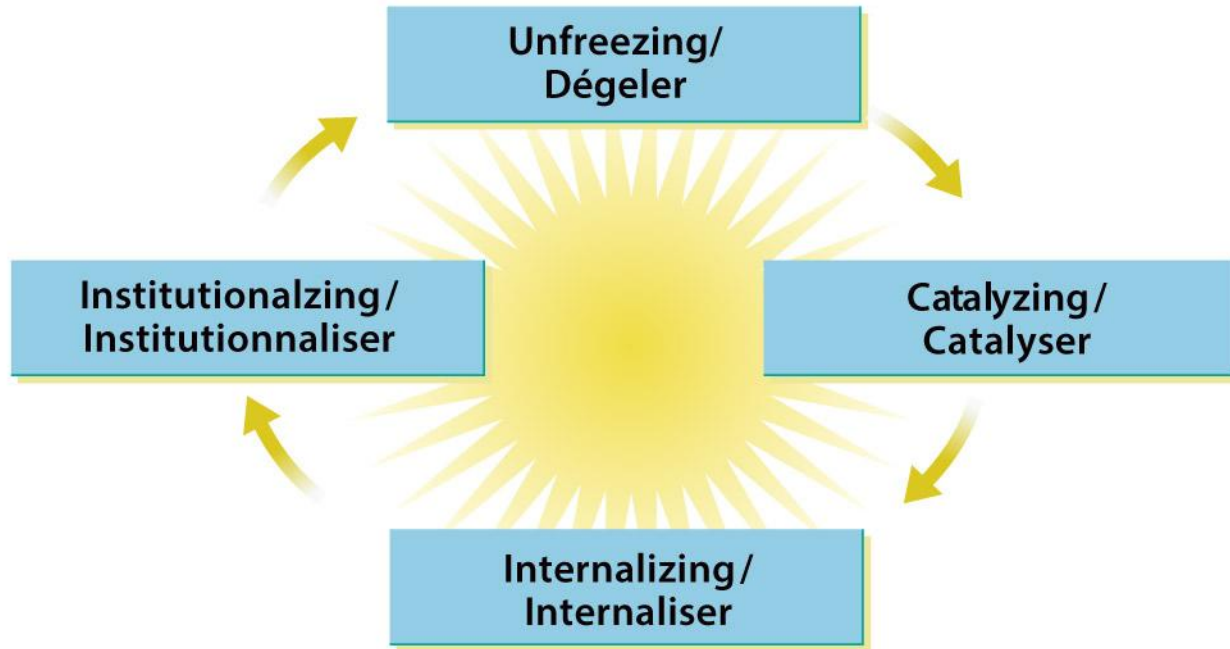


System and Organizational Readiness Conditions

4 stages for promoting youth participation

Le système et l'état de préparation organisationnelle

4 étapes pour promouvoir la participation des jeunes





NOW LET'S LOOK AT

**examples of these ideas in action
some simple, some complex**



University/High School partnerships



St. Thomas University
LEADERS IN LIBERAL ARTS





Bullying
Survey



Drug Endangered Children



INSIDE/OUTSIDE NEW BRUNSWICK YOUTH CENTRE YOUTH MATTERS: OUTSIDE YOUTH LEADERSHIP TEAM: INSIDE

- *Unfreezing*: Began with researcher bringing students in, documenting youth voice for closed custody young people
- *Catalyzing*: NBYC selected youth attended youth leadership conference in community
- *Internalizing*: Asked to start similar “Youth Matters” Group inside
- *Institutionalizing*: Leadership Team of NBYC meet regularly inside, with outside Youth Matters facilitators and COs...to give input to institution
- *Institutionalizing*: Leadership Team identifies issues, events, programs for NBYC population:

Reintegration
planning





YMCA: Research to Program



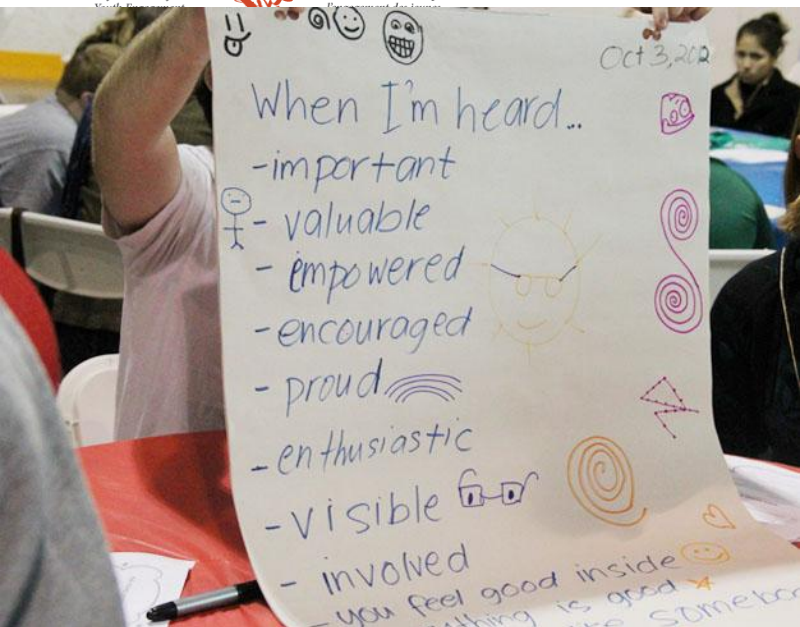


YMCA: experiment to governance

- *Unfreezing*: speakers, lunch&learns, investigating, 3rd party advice
- *Catalyzing*: ad-hoc one-time research advisory group related to research project for Exchanges Program out of YMCA GTA
- *Internalizing*: Research committee becomes on-going national program advisory, meets twice a year. Success encouraged other programs to copy: eg. Teen Night Advisory Groups in local associations. Staff development, feedback from research.
- *Institutionalizing*: GTA Toronto Board of Directors strikes official Youth Advisory Committee of the Board. Board member sits on youth committee.
- *Institutionalizing nationally*: Parallel YMCA Canada Young Leaders Initiative... 3-year process of youth at AGM, youth executives meet between AGMs & advise VP; they develop work plans, priorities. This June, Young Leaders proposed to become voting members of YMCA's National Council. Young leaders carry out engagement initiatives year round to gather voices of young people of all ages to inform their work and advice to YMCA Canada and National Council.
- *In development*: connection, articulation of various advisory mechanisms at local program, local governance, national program, national governance.

Kingston Youth Strategy





Kingston Youth Strategy Process

- *Unfreezing*: Community Jamie Hubley suicide; City pursuit of Youth Friendly Designation
- *Catalyzing*: City Council Resolution authorizing Strategy Development, Ontario government funding to support its development by community and youth
- *Internalizing*– Youth/Adult Partnerships from diverse organizations to research & write
- *Institutionalizing*: Adoption of Kingston Youth Strategy by community organizations and City Council





Kingston Youth Strategy Components

- Action Group: Collaborative Action Steering Team (CAST) : youth and adult members met regularly, often over dinner, home cooked food
- Combined fun activities, youth development opportunities, with research and discussion. Gathered youth input, analyzed it, created draft recommendations, refined
- Large Group -- Youth Adult Partnership Team (YAPT) representing 40 plus organizations across city. Met 2-3 times over year to receive CAST reports, provide feedback
- Youth friendly principles: Wii Fitness for breaks, music, multiple forms of participation for all ages.



Tobacco Control Advisory



- Longest standing federal youth advisory group
- Youth and Young Adults
- Advise on confidential matters



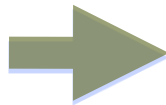


Tobacco Control: Government

- *Unfreezing*: Literature review, option paper
- *Catalyzing*: key program officers champion, host pilot event
- *Internalizing*: Started as Advisory Committee to Minister, became problematic when Minister didn't want to take advice. Renamed Youth Action Committee, focused on youth creating projects in their communities
- *Institutionalizing*: Official resource for policy makers (not Minister) to consult on specific issues; youth sign government confidentiality agreements, see packaging, media plans and creative, hear presentations from various divisions
- *Institutionalizing*: Started with focus on 13 to 17, with 13 to 14 members from each region of the country, most years meets face-to-face twice a year, monthly meetings through telephone, video. Active facebook, blog, social media links between youth and government program officer.
- *Institutionalizing*: Recently created parallel young adult group (graduates from younger group and new recruits). Following rise in smoking rates in this demographic. Young adults mentor younger group. Meetings are concurrent and overlap.

Research: Health Behaviours in School-Aged Children

Youth or Adult Initiated



Knowledge Sharing



Informs Policy





HBSC Youth Advisory

- *Unfreezing:* UNCR and Public Health Agency Mandate related to UNCR
- *Catalyzing:* key program officers champion, host one-off event with 15 youth, 10 policy makers, and 6 researchers who conduct the HBSC study (26,000 Canadian 13 to 15 year-olds, every 3 years, national report for Public Health Agency of Canada, also conducted in 40 plus other countries.
 - Youth engagement experts advised on creating youth friendly program and process (name games, highly visual, level playing field of youth/adult partnership)
 - Researchers presented key visual data graphs
 - Youth explained what they saw, why they thought it was so, discussed data findings and issues they raised with adults
 - Youth voice prioritized, but adult interaction encouraged (colour coded comment cards for youth voice, adult voice, adult reflection on youth voice – what stood out)
 - Interactive shared coding on wall, physical movement of bodies to prioritize, visually see differences, similarities of youth/adult perspectives
- *Internalizing:* Results and process formed part of the PHAC national report for first time. Evaluation demonstrated researcher shift: interpreted some data differently.
- *Institutionalizing:* PHAC supported “How To” Toolkit, the provincial members of the Joint Consortium on School Health started to host similar events to look at provincial data. International Report now pilot testing similar youth input.



Outcomes of Youth Engagement

“I've learned that youth have a lot to teach policy makers and researchers. That they have valuable opinions.”

– Policy Maker

“I feel comfortable because people shared ideas about how to overcome the obstacles and it makes me feel good because I have problems with my mother and my family, personal issues

– Youth

Youth engagement has positive impacts on:

- Young people involved in organizational governance
- Adults in governance roles
- Programs and services
- Organizations

Résultats de l'engagement des jeunes

« J'ai appris que les jeunes ont beaucoup à enseigner aux décideurs et aux chercheurs, et qu'ils ont des opinions constructives. »

– Décideur

“Je me sens à l'aise car les gens ont partagé des idées sur la façon de surmonter des obstacles et je me sens bien car j'ai des problèmes avec ma mère et ma famille, des problèmes personnels ”

– Jeune

L'engagement des jeunes a des impacts positifs sur :

- Les jeunes engagés dans la gouvernance organisationnelle
- Les adultes dans des rôles de gouvernance
- Les programmes et services
- Les organismes

Effective Adults Today

1

Ask

Ask questions of youth before making plans.

2

Check

Check their own negative assumptions about youth.

3

Explain

Explain right away if a youth idea cannot or will not happen.

4

Get Results

Get better program results when youth say they felt involved in plans, decisions

5

Partner

Set common goals with youth for mutual benefit.

6

Stay real

Stay true to who they are, are authentically present



Adult Allies: Adults Role in Youth Engagement Activities

- Adults should be “listeners” — record significant points and comments made by youth on quote cards or forms and post them.
- Adults should ask questions – rather than make statements to avoid the automatic assumption of authority conferred to adults. If something a youth is saying is inaccurate, use questions to prompt critical thinking. Give room and permission for other youth to make the point that you as an adult might want to make through your use of prompting questions.
- Adults should be themselves – In day to day interactions, authenticity and honesty are the qualities youth most respect in adults, not “coolness,” humour or celebrity status. Share as appropriate and comfortable who you are and what you do. Personal stories work: for youth and for adults.

Adultes alliés: Rôle des adultes dans les activités d'engagement des jeunes

- Les adultes doivent « écouter » — noter les points et les commentaires importants émis par les jeunes sur des cartons ou des feuilles et affichez-les.
- Les adultes doivent poser des questions – plutôt que d'affirmer des choses pour éviter des présomptions automatiques d'autorité conférée aux adultes. Si un jeune dit quelque chose d'incorrect, utiliser des questions pour soulever une pensée critique. Donner de l'espace et la chance aux autres jeunes d'affirmer ce que vous, en tant qu'adulte, voulez affirmer mais en posant des questions.
- Les adultes devraient être eux-mêmes— Dans les interactions quotidiennes, l'authenticité et l'honnêteté sont les qualités que les jeunes respectent le plus chez les adultes, et non pas le fait d'être « cool » ou ce qu'ils font. Les histoires personnelles ont de l'impact: pour les jeunes et les adultes.



Other examples

- Boards & Board Committees
- Youth Councils
- Task Forces
- Youth Forums
- On-line mechanisms





Just Ask Us...

“We know something you don’t.”

“You know something we don’t.”

“We can reach and recruit youth you can’t.”

“ We can help you grow and flourish.”

“ You can do the same for us.”



Sharing the stories

The Students Commission
Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement

La commission des étudiants
Le centre d'excellence pour l'engagement des jeunes

SURVEYS & TOOLS

HOME ABOUT TOOLS CONTACT US ORG ADMIN LOGIN PARTICIPANT LOGIN RESEARCH SC HOME

The Students Commission and our Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement welcomes you to our interactive evaluation tools site.

REGISTER NOW

Organization

Participant

Surveys and Tools for Evaluating Youth Programs and Events

This site provides youth serving organizations with the capacity and consistent tools to evaluate their youth programs, events and initiatives. This project will support both youth and your organization in tracking outcomes and telling the story of your youth programs and initiatives more readily, rigorously and efficiently.

Organizations who register with us will be able to pilot various evaluation options and models, and receive evaluation reports:

- Customizable evaluation tools
- On-going data analysis from a centralized database
- Individual organizational and province-wide or national reports

[Click here](#) if you are from an organization interested in using our evaluation tools

EXPLORE: Click on the menu buttons above to explore who we are, how to contact us and what tools we can share with you.

REGISTER ORGANIZATION: Then click here to [register your organization](#) and events/programs.

PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION: Click here if you are a [youth, young adult or adult coming here for the first time](#) to do a survey for your youth group, program or event.

If you have already registered as a youth or as an organization, use the menu buttons above to login.