PROMOTE THE POSITIVE

LEAD EFFORTS TO ADVANCE POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING, AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP
“YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF GLOBAL CHANGE AND INNOVATION. EMPOWERED, THEY CAN BE KEY AGENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE. IF, HOWEVER, THEY ARE LEFT ON SOCIETY’S MARGINS, ALL OF US WILL BE IMPOVERISHED. LET US ENSURE THAT ALL YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE LIVES OF THEIR SOCIETIES.

KOFI ANNAN”
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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) supports an array of programs for young people. While they vary in terms of specific activities offered, objectives and settings, all DYCD programs operate within a single framework shaped by three interrelated concepts: Positive Youth Development (PYD), Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and Youth Leadership.

The purpose of this Guide is to articulate DYCD’s perspective and promote a shared understanding of these concepts by providing a common lens and language through which to view them. This, in turn, will enable community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide the services and DYCD managers who assess them to more easily identify program strengths and weaknesses, share best practices and work together to improve program quality.

Ultimately, a clearer understanding of DYCD’s expectations regarding critical aspects of program implementation and continuous improvement will benefit all stakeholders.

The body of the Guide encapsulates DYCD’s perspectives on PYD, SEL, and Youth Leadership and indicates how they should be embedded into practice. Below, each concept is briefly outlined, with illustrations showing how they intersect and overlap. In high quality youth programs, PYD, SEL and Youth Leadership aspects will be seamlessly integrated.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT [PYD]

PYD is an over-arching, assets-based approach that DYCD expects all CBOs to embrace, irrespective of program content and specifics. It provides the foundation on which to promote healthy youth development and resilience. To this end, PYD emphasizes the importance of a safe environment and a sense of belonging and providing authentic opportunities for youth to be heard and effect positive change in their communities.
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING [SEL]

SEL is the process through which young people acquire SEL competencies (i.e., the knowledge, attitudes, and skills) that they need to thrive in school and beyond. These competencies, identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), are:

Self-awareness: Ability to understand and manage emotions

Self-management: Set and achieve positive goals

Social awareness: Feel and show empathy for others

Relationship skills: Establish and maintain positive relationships

Responsible decision-making

The SEL competencies are both integral to and significant goals and outcomes of PYD. CBOs must intentionally focus on SEL, since the SEL competencies are among the most significant benefits youth can gain from consistent participation in high quality programs.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Youth Leadership builds on PYD principles, with an emphasis on providing: (1) leadership opportunities within the program, organization, and community; (2) skill-building and capacity for making decisions and solving problems; (3) opportunities to deepen understanding of shared experiences and participate in community projects; and (4) strong youth-adult partnerships.

Youth Leadership is seen as having three critical components: skills (including SEL competencies, communication, active listening, and collaborative skills); action (stimulated by the desire and opportunity to acquire and master skills and effect change); and reflection (reinforcing what has been learned, feeding confidence, imparting lessons learned, and providing opportunities to identify and respond to new challenges). Both PYD approaches and SEL competencies support and sustain Youth Leadership skills which, in turn, reinforce the developmental gains nurtured by PYD and SEL, creating a continuing cycle of benefits.
POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT [PYD]

PYD is based on the belief that, given guidance and support from caring adults, all youth can grow up healthy and happy, making positive contributions to their families, schools, and communities.

PYD is an intentional, pro-social approach designed to:

1. Engage youth in productive and constructive ways in multiple domains - communities, schools, families, peer groups, organizations.

2. Recognize, utilize, and enhance youth strengths/assets.

3. Promote positive outcomes by fostering positive relationships and providing opportunities and supports that help youth build skills, gain mastery, and develop leadership skills.

Outcomes promoted by PYD include:
- Resilience, confidence, grit
- Social/communication skills
- Emotional competence
- Positive relationships with peers and adults
- Engagement in school and community
- Sense of belonging

DYCD Highlights 8 Key factors and experiences that promote PYD
Check out the framework on page 9
Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are the foundation that defines what is important for PYD to happen.

- **Intentional, proactive process.** PYD programs purposefully seek to develop protective factors and complement efforts designed to prevent/reduce risky or negative behaviors and attitudes.

- **Acknowledgment and utilization of youth assets.** PYD represents an investment in young people that assumes youth have the capacity for positive growth and development. They are viewed not just as recipients of services but active agents who can use their assets to work productively in partnership with adults.

- **PYD enables youth to thrive and flourish.** PYD programs provide the opportunities and supports to enable youth to grow resilient, confident and competent.

- **Youth leadership.** Development of leadership skills is part of PYD but youth are not required to lead; they can attend programs, actively participate, contribute, or assume leadership roles.

- **Civic engagement.** Youth are provided with opportunities to contribute to their communities through service.

Features of PYD Programs

- **Focus on youth strengths and protective factors.** Program designs take account of underlying risk and protective factors in planning and providing services and offer evidence-informed interventions that purposefully promote resilience.

- **Ensure basic youth needs are met and earn their trust.** Programs build trusting relationships by ensuring that youth are connected to appropriate resources to meet their needs.

- **Engage youth as active agents in an ongoing assessment and planning process.**

- **Continuously monitor program effectiveness and make improvements on ongoing basis.**

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Section

How does PYD differ from traditional youth services?

PYD represents a shift in how we look at and provide youth services. It moves us from fixing problems to building on strengths: from reacting to risky behavior to proactively building positive outcomes; from targeting troubled youth to engaging all youth; and from regarding youth as recipients of services to treating youth as resources and active partners. With PYD, youth development is no longer just about programs and interventions – it is about relationships.

What are strengths or assets?

Assets are often called protective factors or characteristics of the individual and aspects of the environment that help buffer a person’s reaction to risk factors and thus, result in resilience. The Search Institute uses the term “building blocks” or assets of positive youth development that cover eight important areas of human development. Click here to learn more about the 40 developmental assets for adolescents.

How do you know if you are offering opportunities for youth?

Have you build in opportunities or chances for youth to practice, fine-tune, and advance the skills they have learned, as well as belonging and occasions for leadership and contribution through youth voice, participation, and engagement? We want to see youth actively engaged. What does this look like? Check out the Youth Voice rubic created by Freechild Project. Click here.

What kind of supports should we see?

Supports are the mentors, caring adults, and youth workers who offer guidance and positive relationships with young people. Additional supports are clear expectations, boundaries, and structured settings as well as access to information and resources.

Check out this video:
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which young people acquire SEL competencies (i.e., the knowledge, attitudes, and skills) that they need to thrive in school and beyond. These competencies, identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), are: (1) self-management; (2) self-awareness; (3) responsible decision-making; (4) relationship skills; and (5) social awareness.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to:

- Understand and manage emotions.
- Set and achieve positive goals.
- Feel and show empathy for others.
- Establish and maintain positive relationships, and
- Make responsible decisions.

Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker. SEL skills are developed in safe and supportive learning environments such as schools, after-school programs, the family, and the community where individuals feel valued and respected. SEL skills are fundamental to social and emotional development and effective life functioning, and have a critical impact on mental health, ethical development, motivation, and academic achievement.

SEL, as such, is not a program. However, many programs provide youth with instruction in and opportunities to practice, apply, and be recognized for using SEL skills in appropriate ways. Effective instructional methods for teaching SEL skills involve active and engaging learning approaches.
Staffing and SEL

To promote SEL, program staff need to:

- Be SEL role models
- Provide opportunities for participants to practice and apply the SEL skills they have been taught
- Use participatory instructional methods that draw on participants’ experience to engage them in learning
- Emphasize participants’ strengths before addressing areas where there is room for improvement
- Partner with participants’ families and schools to promote SEL, when this is relevant and suitable
- Give participants choices and help them identify the pros and cons of alternative solutions to problems
- Make sure that inappropriate behavior is handled with fairness and consistency
- Encourage participation in community service projects
- Encourage participants to discuss how they or other people may or may not express understanding of the feelings of others or make use of problem-solving skills

What does SEL look like? Watch this video

What more information?

Check out CASEL’s website for additional videos and resources. Click here.
Youth Leadership builds on PYD principles, with an emphasis on providing: (1) leadership opportunities within the program, organization, and community; (2) skill-building and capacity for making decisions and solving problems; (3) opportunities to deepen understanding of shared experiences and participate in community projects; and (4) strong youth-adult partnerships.

Youth leadership development has the potential to solve community problems, enhance civic participation, and promote direct benefits for adults, organizations, and communities through stronger connections to young people in the community. Since 2007, DYCD has supported youth leadership efforts with its Teen ACTION (Achieving Change Together in Our Neighborhoods) and Youth Councils, funded as part of the Beacon and Cornerstone programs. More recently, youth leadership development was included as a requirement for middle school programs as part of the 2008 OST RFP and the SONYC expansion.

The purpose of the DYCD Youth Leadership Development Framework is to promote a common language for youth leadership development and to help providers map out and design quality youth leadership programming; it was designed to answer the question: “What is youth leadership development?”

The Youth Leadership framework is comprised of three critical components: skills (including SEL competencies, communication, active listening, and collaborative skills); action (stimulated by the desire and opportunity to acquire and master skills and effect change); and reflection (reinforcing what has been learned, feeding confidence, imparting lessons learned, and providing opportunities to identify and respond to new challenges). Both PYD approaches and SEL competencies support and sustain Youth Leadership skills which, in turn, reinforce the developmental gains nurtured by PYD and SEL, creating a continuing cycle of benefits.
Supports for Youth Leadership Development

In addition to the core components, programs must also have critical supports in place to ensure youth can engage fully in skill building, action, and reflection. First, programs must provide a supportive environment (safety, positive relationships, sense of belonging). Next, programs should offer intentionally designed program activities and experiences that use sound strategies for utilizing aligned curriculum and instructional strategies.

**SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

Young people can become leaders when they feel safe and supported. When the environment is a safe community for all youth, then they are able to take on challenges, risk possible failure, and step into leadership roles that promote learning. In a program where activities and experiences promote a safe and supportive environment, key environmental factors for youth leadership support (e.g., youth voice/choice, welcoming atmosphere, positive youth interactions, and opportunities for growth) are in place and demonstrated most of the time.

**INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND STRATEGIES**

Intentional Design. When developing and implementing program activities, program staff first should consider whether and how they are being intentional in the design of those experiences. This planning phase is a critical first step that sets a foundation for other curricular and instructional strategies.

**LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES**

Activities that foster leadership should incorporate practices and processes that result in youth-centered programming that is deliberately focused on developing key leadership skills and creating a systemwide youth leadership culture within its environment. Activities may include (but are not limited to) community volunteerism; debate participation; training to be a peer mediator; participation in a youth advisory committee with the program, school, or community; learning activities about leadership principles and styles; mentoring relationship; resource-mapping activities that allow youth to take the lead in planning and carrying out a search of community resources or service learning; and developing a personal plan with goals, action steps, and deadlines. Throughout the program activities and experiences, there should be consistent and clear evidence of opportunity for youth skill building in self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills, collaboration, and communication. Moreover, youth and adults should work in partnership through a formal system, ensuring youth decision making and leadership with supportive adult input.

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Section

Where can I find more information about intentional activity design?

For more information about intentional activity design, refer to out-of-school time resources such as Beyond the Bell: A Toolkit for Creating Effective Afterschool and Expanded Learning Programs, or the online Afterschool Training Toolkit.

Planning for youth leadership?

Get started by checking out the provider youth leadership self-reflection tool.

**CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

The tools and methods that staff members use to impart information and facilitate an activity will vary from program to program. Some programs may opt to adopt a formal curriculum; others may have a homegrown curriculum specific to their mission and goals.

Ultimately, we suggest that you ensure the curriculum and instructional strategies are designed for your setting, and that you and your colleagues are prepared to deliver the curriculum or modify as needed.

In addition to having a curriculum that provides the tools and resources that staff members need to plan an activity, program staff also need to consider the method of activity delivery. Research has shown that skill development is effective when activities explicitly target specific skills and outcomes.

Because we know that youth learn best when they are engaged in what they are learning and have the opportunity to explore concepts and skills through a variety of formats, we suggest incorporating both explicit and embedded strategies for skill development throughout leadership development activities.
Promote Positive Experiences That 8 Key Factors &

1. Positive Social Norms
   - Engage youth in creating a respectful and inclusive environment and involve a diverse workforce.

2. Supportive Relationships
   - Programs encourage youth in understanding a youth’s point of view, listening to youth, and working with youth from different cultures.

3. Opportunities to Belong
   - Programs help youth feel like they belong to a part of a special group and feel they are a part of the program.

4. Appropriate Structure
   - An important part of the program.

5. Integration of Family, School, and Community Efforts
   - Programs incorporate ways to engage parents and/or guardians.

6. Opportunities for Skill Development
   - Programs provide opportunities to master and apply skills such as academic and social emotional learning, leadership skills, and service learning or peer support.

7. Opportunities to Make a Difference
   - Programs encourage youth in exploring career and work.

8. Physical and Psychological Safety
   - Programs encourage youth in exploring career and work.

Promote Positive Outcomes by Fostering Positive Relationships and Providing Opportunities and Supporting that Help Your Communities Thrive in Multiple Domains Such as Communities, Schools, Families, Peer Groups, Organizations, Recognize Utilize and Enhance Your Community’s Strengths and Assets.
WHAT ARE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CORE COMPETENCIES?
WHAT IS YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT?

CREATE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

LEARN BY DOING LEADERSHIP

EVALUATION

REFLECTION

ATTITUDES

SKILLS

LEADERSHIP

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Action and Reflection

Supportive Environment

Youth and Choice

Authentic Opportunity: Youth-led Action and Reflection

Community Building: Create opportunity for youth to lead

Member Access: Youth full participation and decision-making

Adaptive Environment: Ability of youth to carry out positions, plan

Role-emergence: Ability to change the options of others by applying for positions

Organizational: Designing opportunities with youth in mind

Listening and Speaking: put youth at center

Active Listening: Active listening and critical questions as a group

Confidential: Sharing in process, developing skills and confidence

Youth Giving and Receiving: Youth work with and support each other

Imagined Leadership: Helping a passive individual develop leadership

Persistence: Following through on promises, focusing on how to model what you want others to do

Self-Assessment: Seeing your work and choices, then improving on the next steps

Moved: Good connections and having high standards

Promote the Positive