

Peer Networking Meeting Notes—Adult and Youth Communication January 15, 2009

Introductions

Nancy welcomed everyone to the meeting and encouraged participants to pre-register so there are enough donuts for everyone!

Announcements

- Grand Hank productions is creating a program celebrating African Americans in science; looking to role out in February; targeting grades 4 -8. Contact Grand Hank for more information.
- Annual citywide health summit is scheduled for March 4th- from 12:00 to 5:00 pm at Temple University. The summit will include workshops, dinner and information on healthy relationships. All youth in city are invited to the summit.
- Joyce Drayton from GEGISOM, The Georgia E Gregory Interdenominational School of Music, announced that students will be performing on February 27th @ 6:30. Contact Joyce for more information.
- Allison Buehler from Mazzoni announced that Mazzoni provides free professional development opportunities about creating safe, welcoming environments for LGBTQ youth; work with community health educator to provide comprehensive health education; inclusive; seven session series work with multiple ages; another program for children and youth;
- Nancy Peter from the OSTRC announced that the Carver Science Fair is still looking for judges for the carver fair; need not be a scientist; most important is interest in education. Contact Nancy for more information.
- Nancy Peter announced the OSTRC is creating several reference sheets on various topics in OST. The inaugural sheet is about OST and is available for dissemination. Please request sheets from Nancy and share feedback and ideas for future sheets.
- Deepa Vasudevan announced that the next PNM will be held on **February 17th from 9:20 – 11:30 am at the United Way**. The topic will be **“Sports as Positive Youth Development in Out-of-School Time.”**
- Deepa Vasudevan also announced that the **new OSTRC training directory is available**.
- Vinson Houston announced his work on a new skateboarding program; Oasis, which emphasizes creative development.

Panel Discussion—Improving Communication between Youth and Adults

Farish Sawyer, Breakthrough of Greater Philadelphia—Currently serves as Senior Program Director for the program. Breakthrough provides programs for low-income high achieving middle school youth. Previously, Farish ran a mentoring program in DC.

Farish presented six points for communicating with youth and emphasized that it is important to have patience:

- 1) consistency—building relationships; idea of one person for students go to; staff retention is important for strong communication between youth and adults
- 2) structure—students thrive on a structured environment

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- 3) ownership—using focus group to help create programming; youth taking ownership and giving feedback; private-club activities help create a sense of belonging and ownership
- 4) engaging activities—helps communication happen organically; great kids every day; talking to each students individually; small learning communities; all school meeting—all student run; general assembly; students create; promotes ownership and sense of belonging;
- 5) two-way sharing—consider an autobiographical activity with students; incorporate teachers; teachers also share who they are
- 5) honesty—honest with self about who you are; must be comfortable with who you are; kids will know if not honest; will gain respect of students-treat as mature
- 6) empathy—understand, appreciate and respect the kids; not judging kids in program; processing what's going on with them

Bunmi Samuel, Friends Neighborhood Guild—Currently runs programs at the Guild. He previously worked for Congresso running programs. Bunmi stated that his biggest 'aha' moment was how we communicate in general. Bunmi stated as adults we always want to always be in charge; the relationship with youth needs to be about engagement; Bunmi constantly thinks about youth and how to communicate and said he had to step back and review his presentation and expectations of engagement with youth. He recommended creating a space where youth feel comfortable coming and talking. He also emphasized that relationship building takes time and said that it is important to give youth the opportunity to lead, make mistakes and learn.

Kemal Nance, Philadelphia Youth Network—Currently serves as Director of Youth Leadership. This program trains young people to be informed citizens about programs and policies. Previously served as Director of Upward Bound at Swathmore. Kemal also is a professional dancer. He stated that interacting with young people is not much different than talking to adults, but that the consequences are more profound for youth. Kemal said adults should check the way in which they are communicating with youth. He reaffirmed Farish's points of being honest and authentic with the youth, especially if you do not know an answer. He further added that consistency is very important. Some youth have no consistency in home life. Kemal also noted it is important to find the balance between mentorship and friendship—must be clear about the adult's role is in the youth's life.

Discussion

Helena Showell—thanks for excellent panel—Have you run into problems with young people who have learning disabilities that may be hidden? How do you interact successfully?

Farish—often if a youth is acting out, he/she may be frustrated or bored. It also could be a learning disability. Important to respect student and communicate effectively. Try to get student to start talking about how they have overcome situations; facilitate coping mechanisms; needs to come from a place of trust; working with individual situation.

Bunmi—come with certain approach; need to adapt lesson to students' needs; learn how students best learn; change environment to make sure it doesn't look like school day; intense retreats where students sleep in building and get a chance to really learn who student is

Nancy Peter—really good panel; a few points. The balance between being a friend and being adult-specifically about sharing—could be very simple, yet also profound. Important to recognize how different people have different styles. Encourage staff/teachers to visit other programs and watch teachers with very different styles of teaching; need to find own personality; kids respond differently to various styles.

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Kemal—If you ask very intrusive questions about youth; do so with care and respect.

Dyresha—mutual respect and having expectations of youth; think of big picture; recognize how young people are stereotyped.

Kemal—have young people create own reality; ask how kids how they want to be perceived? Create their own ideology; give young people to create who they want to be.

Bunmi—how interact when go into store; how do you want to be engaged? How do you feel you should be treated? Is there a teachable moment in the store; teach students and flip script? Not aggressive, but assertive.

Joyce Drayton—Our program uses two effective communication tools—do a laughing song—laugh as much as you can for thirty seconds; releases so much; graffiti wall—little squares with different things (who's an only child, traveled out of country) excellent tool to exude information from our students; honest; sharing.

Meeting Concluded