Youth Leadership Development Curriculum

Facilitator's Guide

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Introduction

Simply put, leadership development is an effort that enhances the learner's capacity to lead people. Leading is setting direction and guiding others to follow that direction. A critical skill for leaders is the ability to manage their own learning.

As designed, the implementation of the ASPIRA Youth Leadership Development Curriculum (YLDC) will be made possible through the ASPIRA Clubs. As an ASPIRA Club advisor, you will need to facilitate the learning process of our Aspirantes. This curriculum is structured to assist this process. This curriculum is provided to enhance your knowledge about youth leadership development. The facilitator is encouraged to review the brief summary of research on the theoretical framework for youth leadership development provided in Appendix A.

The Facilitator's Guide has been designed to provide an overview of the curriculum, its goal, objectives and expectations.

Overall Goal

The goal of the ASPIRA Youth Leadership Development Curriculum is to build resiliency skills, positive identity and self-esteem through a comprehensive positive youth development program. This tool seeks to reduce risky behaviors among middle and high school youth and to prevent them from engaging in risky behaviors in the future.

Overall Objectives

- Participants will develop resiliency skills through their participation in the varied activities.
- Participants will demonstrate positive attitudinal change regarding school, their peers, and parents, and will have increased their self-esteem as measured through research studies.

Cultural Competency

The ASPIRA Youth Leadership Development Curriculum is designed to be culturally competent; however, any feedback provided by facilitators and participants will be carefully reviewed and considered in order to enhance its effectiveness.

Likewise, the facilitator is expected to be aware and knowledgeable about the population groups in the program and able to conduct activities in a manner that does not only demonstrate understanding of the varied cultures, but also promotes cultural awareness.

Role of the Facilitator

In implementing the Curriculum, the facilitator plays a very important role. The facilitator will not only facilitate the lessons, but will also attend to participants' needs and show support to participants as needed. The facilitator will also maintain a group process that encourages group interaction and fosters interpersonal learning. Professionals in the education field suggest that displaying a positive attitude significantly impacts students' learning experiences (Jankowska & Atlay, 2008). The facilitator is encouraged to express enthusiasm and make creative use of space, if possible, incorporate technological tools in the classroom such as using the computer and overhead projector, among others.

The facilitator is expected to follow the participants' progress, selecting activities appropriate for participants' educational and developmental levels. The role of the facilitator is not to lead a series of activities, but to assist participants in reflecting about the activities and their experience in the program. The facilitator assists participants in processing information or looking at the "why" of a given experience (Miller, 1995).

It may be helpful for the facilitators to explain their role to the participants before the execution of the activities so that participants can begin thinking about their expectations.

Likewise, the facilitator will need to work with participants in establishing rules and expectations for a successful program. This should be done in a brainstorming session, in which the facilitator takes notes on the blackboard. Involving participants in this process will provide them with a sense of belonging and accountability. Incorporating participants in *Establishing Ground Rules* also entails that all of the participants play a very important role in the group and that their ideas, thoughts and opinions matter.

Role of the Participant

The role of the participant is to participate in all activities and to reflect on their learning experiences. They will need to abide by the rules and meet the expectations as future leaders.

Among the expectations are:

o *Confidentiality:* Participants are expected to maintain the integrity of the group by keeping things to themselves and not disclosing what is discussed in the groups out of the classroom.

o *Respect:* Participants are expected to respect each other's opinions, which include allowing each other to express their views and concerns.

Curriculum Structure

The Curriculum is arranged into eleven units. All units have modules followed by activities. Each module is intended to represent a workshop. Note that each unit contains a course description, followed by goals, and resources needed. Make sure to tell participants what the goals are for each activity. These goals are stated in Table I.

Table I:

Units	Goals
I: Overview of ASPIRA	Participants will develop knowledge of ASPIRA's mission, vision and history and the ASPIRA Process. Participants will also understand the importance of ASPIRA in the development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community. The overall aim is that youth will use ASPIRA's principles as a guide for their future actions and development.
II: ASPIRA Clubs	Participants will develop knowledge of ASPIRA Clubs, and the responsibilities of club officers. The overall aim is that students will use ASPIRA's AAA Process as a tool in their future development.
III: Personal Growth	Participants will develop knowledge of self and others in order to prepare for effective leadership through the exposure to a series of activities that promote healthy self esteem, identity, cultural awareness, development of critical thinking, communication, and organizational

	skills.
IV: Building Resiliency	Youth will develop resiliency skills through participation in workshops on gangs, bullying and youth violence prevention. This course promotes child-parent communication and emphasizes self-responsibility.
V: Leadership Development	Youth will learn the basic concepts of leadership development. They will learn the concept of leadership and will understand what it means to be a leader. They will also learn different models and theories of leadership.
VI: Academic Success	Participants will learn how to plan their academic studies in order to have successful academic performance in preparation for postsecondary education. In addition, they will learn about the college application process and opportunities for paying for college.
VII: Career Awareness	Participants will become familiar with career research and paths to careers. They will also apply their decision-making skills to career selection.
VIII: Community Involvement	Youth will learn the basic concepts of community and community history. They will also examine the influence of culture on community and will have an opportunity to develop and implement a community service project.
IX: Cultural Awareness	Participants will develop knowledge and awareness about the Latino culture. They will be able to define culture and race. Participants will also develop consciousness of issues related to diversity, such as inclusion, cultural appreciation, prejudice, racism, and stereotyping.
X: Public Policy and Leadership	Participants will learn about the public policy process, while developing their leadership skills that will facilitate their involvement in the policy arena at the local, regional, and national levels. Students will define public

	policy and study policy-making structures. Students will become more acquainted with their community, and the public policy issues affecting it. They will be provided with applications of policy development for influencing public policy.
XI: Financial Literacy	Youth will learn the basics of financial literacy and personal finance. They will learn the concepts of banking services and will understand what it means to have a successful financial plan.

Curriculum Timeframe

The curriculum was designed to be implemented during a period of four years or levels starting with ASPIRAntes at middle school or ninth grade. Note that on Table II for each of the activities we have assigned a level and a name to each of the levels following the Taino culture theme. After completion of level one Aspirantes will receive the Naborias recognition or pin, after completing level 2, participants will receive the Nitainos recognition or pin, after level three they will be recognize as Bohiques and once completing level four they will be recognized as Caciques.

This Guide is designed to provide structure in carrying out the lessons in order to assist the facilitator. While it is encouraged that each activity be implemented, there is some degree of flexibility for the facilitator. Activities not designated as optional are must teach or required activities. Please be advised that the duration of the curriculum will depend on several factors. Your students will have a range of experience, knowledge, and interest in the varied subject areas. In addition, units vary in the number of activities. Therefore, it is possible that the time you spend on each unit will vary. Overall, each activity should last approximately 55 minutes, unless otherwise stated. In some cases, the facilitator will need to select more than one activity. However, the facilitator is encouraged to examine all concepts presented in the activity before proceeding to the next.

Additionally, the facilitator is expected to cover the core areas of the curriculum, which consist of: Overview of ASPIRA, ASPIRA Clubs, Personal Growth, Building Resiliency, Leadership Development, Academic Success, Career Awareness, Community Involvement, Cultural Awareness, Public Policy and Leadership and Financial Literacy. The expected completion timeframe varies from unit to unit. In order to cover all core areas, the facilitator will need to plan accordingly by selecting the precise number of activities. For the expected parameters see table II.

Table II:

Youth Development Program Curricular Map

Unit	Title	Module	Activity	Level 1[1]	Level 2[2]	Level 3[3]	Level 4[4]	Recommendations
1.	Overview of ASPIRA	1.1 ASPIRA Overview	1.1.1 What is ASPIRA	■				
		1.2 Dr. Antonia Pantoja Life	1.1.2 Dr. Antonia Pantoja Life and Contributions	■				
			1.1.3 Induction ceremony (Areyto)	■				
2	The ASPIRA Clubs	2.1 ASPIRA Process and Clubs	2.1.1 The ASPIRA process	■				
			2.1.2 Parliamentary Procedure	■				
			2.1.3 Nomination of Officers	■	■	■	■	
			2.1.4 Bylaws	■				
			2.1.5 Overcoming the Fear of Leading a Club	■				
			2.1.6 ASPIRA Club Campaign	■				Optional
			2.1.7 Developing Banners for the ASPIRA Club	■				Optional
			2.1.8 Consensus Building	■				
			2.1.9 Do and Don'ts of Leading a Club	■				
			2.1.10 Magic Lamp	■				Optional
			2.1.11 Monthly Club Business Meeting	■				Optional
3	Building Personal Growth	3.1 Self Awareness and Self Knowledge	3.1.1 Who are we?		■			
			3.1.2 Building Self-Identity		■			
			3.1.3 Inside / Outside Masks		■			Optional

[1] Level 1 Name = Naborias

[2] Level 2 Name = Nitainos

[3] Level 3 Name = Bohiques

[4] Level 4 Name = Caiques

Unit	Title	Module	Activity	Level				Recommendations
				1[1]	2[2]	3[3]	4[4]	
			3.1.4 Self-Concepts and Media Influence		▨			Optional
			3.1.5 Building Self-Esteem		▨			
		3.2 Decision Making Skills	3.2.1 Decision Making	▨				
		3.3 Communications Skills	3.3.1 Two-Way Communication		▨			
			3.3.2 Choosing your words correctly		▨			
			3.3.3 Assertiveness or passiveness		▨			
			3.3.4 Anger Management		▨			
		3.4 Conflict Resolution	3.4.1 Styles of Handling Conflict			▨		
			3.4.2 Fighting conflict and resolving conflict			▨		
			3.4.3 Family and conflict			▨		
		3.5 Family Enrichment	3.5.1 The meaning of family		▨			
			3.5.2 Three styles of family leadership		▨			
			3.5.3 Family relationships		▨			
		3.5 Social Skills	3.5.1 Active Listening	▨				
			3.5.2 One Way/Two Way Communication	▨				
			3.5.3 Building Coping Skills	▨				Optional
			3.5.4 The Miracle Workers	▨				Optional
		3.6 Substance Abuse Awareness and Prevention	3.6.1 Introduction to drugs	▨				
			3.6.2 Recognizing and preventing drug use	▨				
		3.7 Values	3.7.1 Identify values	▨				

Unit	Title	Module	Activity	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Recommendations
			3.7.2 Exploring cultural values	▨				
			3.7.3 Gift from the heart	▨				Optional
		3.8 Personal Mission, Vision, and Goals	3.8.1 Writing a personal vision statement	▨				
			3.8.2 Writing a mission statement	▨				
		3.9 Mentoring	3.9.1 Learning about mentoring			▨		
			3.9.2 Group mentoring			▨		Optional
4	Youth Violence	4.1 Youth Violence	4.1.1 What is youth violence?	▨				
			4.1.2 Goal setting	▨				
		4.2 Bullying	4.2.1 Reasons and effects and effects of bullying	▨				Optional
			4.2.2 Solutions to bullying	▨				
			4.2.3 Role Play	▨				
		4.3 Gang Violence	4.3.1 Superlatives	▨				Optional
			4.3.2 Characteristics of a gang member	▨				
			4.3.3 Solutions to gang violence	▨				
			4.3.4 Pledge not to join a gang	▨				
5	Leadership Development	5.1 Definition of Leadership and Discussion of Theories	5.1.1 Student definition of theories		▨			
			5.1.2 Leadership theories classification		▨			Optional
		5.2 Types of Leadership	5.2.1 Identifying leadership traits and types for personal models of leadership		▨			
		5.3 Leader and Follower	5.3.1 The leader		▨			

Unit	Title	Module	Activity	1[1]	2[2]	3[3]	4[4]	Recommendations
			Relations		▓			
			5.3.2 Group dynamics		▓			
		5.4 Diversity of Leadership	5.4.1 Profile of Latino leaders		▓			Optional
			5.4.2 Dimensions of diversity		▓			Optional
			5.4.3 Gender issues		▓			
		5.5 Defining Leadership Styles	5.5.1 Styles vs. Types		▓			
			5.5.2 Leadership styles		▓			
		5.6 Types of Power for Leaders	5.6.1 Recognizing types of power		▓			Optional
		5.7 Individual Differences	5.7.1 Identifying personal comfort with leadership traits		▓			Optional
		5.8 Leadership as a process	5.8.1 What is the process		▓			
		5.9 Conflict Resolution	5.9.1 Conflict resolution styles			▓		
			5.9.2 Conflict resolution techniques and problem solving			▓		
			5.9.3 Empathetic listening			▓		Optional
6	Academic Success	6.1 Study Skills and Time Management	6.1.1 Is education important to you?	▓				
			6.1.2 Study habits	▓				
			6.1.3 Note-taking and highlighting	▓				
			6.1.4 Time management	▓				
		6.2 Academic Planning and Goal Setting	6.2.1 Goal Setting	▓				
			6.2.2 Academic and career portfolio	▓				
		6.3 Investigating College	6.3.1 Types of college and types of degrees				▓	

Unit	Title	Module	Activity	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Recommendations
			6.3.2 Testing, applications and financial aid				▨	
			6.3.3 Selecting a college				▨	
7	Career Awareness	7.1 Personal Analysis and Career Exploration	7.1.1 Self-assessment		▨			
			7.1.2 Career games		▨			Optional
			7.1.3 Students explore careers		▨			
			7.1.4 What do you want to be?		▨			
		7.2 Career Decision Making	7.2.1 Decision-making process		▨			
			7.2.2 Career Decision making					
		7.3 Paths to Careers	7.3.1 Your Future				▨	
			7.3.2 Guest speaker – Academic Advisor				▨	Optional
			7.3.3 Resume, cover letter and interview building				▨	
8	Community Involvement	8.1 Defining Community	8.1.1 Defining community			▨		
		8.2 The Influence of Culture on Community	8.2.1 Culture and community			▨		
			8.2.2 Community leader workshop			▨		
			8.2.3 Understanding culture			▨		
			8.2.4 Community – Analyzing Latinidad			▨		Optional
		8.3 Community Values	8.3.1 Your place in the community				▨	Optional
			8.3.2 Neighborhood Development				▨	Optional
		8.4 Community Assessment	8.4.1 The community in which you				▨	

Unit	Title	Module	Activity	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Recommendations
			live				■	
		8.5 Community Service	8.5.1 Project development workshop				■	
			8.5.2 Project action				■	
			8.5.3 Final project presentations				■	
9	Building Cultural Awareness	9.1 Latino Culture	9.1.1 The meaning of culture and heritage	■				
			9.1.2 Latino race or culture	■				Optional
			9.1.3 My favorite holiday	■				Optional
			9.1.4 Labor day around the world	■				Optional
		9.2 Diversity	9.2.1 Diversity	■				
			9.2.2 The family	■				
			9.2.3 Cultural project	■				Optional
		9.3 Prejudice	9.3.1 Group stereotyping	■				
			9.3.2 Stereotyping and religions	■				Optional
			9.3.3 Latina/Latino images / communications power	■				
			9.3.4 Racism	■				
			9.3.5 Homophobia	■				
10	Public Policy Leadership Program	10.1 Understanding Public Policy	10.1.1 Overview of public policy			■		
		10.2 Advocacy Model	10.2.1 Identification of community issues			■		
			10.2.2 Media Advocacy			■		
			10.2.3 The art of collaboration			■		
		10.3 Public policy Analysis	10.3.1 Analyzing public policy issues			■		

Unit	Title	Module	Activity	Level 1[1]	Level 2[2]	Level 3[3]	Level 4[4]	Recommendations
			10.3.2 Force field analysis			▨		Optional
			10.3.3 Building a logic map			▨		Optional
		10.4 Developing a Policy Brief	10.4.1 Overview of developing a policy brief			▨		
			10.4.2 Interaction with key decision makers			▨		
11	Financial Literacy and Personal Finances	11.1 Introduction to Personal Finance	11.1.1 Defining personal finance		▨			
			11.1.2 Recognizing spending value		▨			
			11.1.3 Identifying ideal life style		▨			
			11.1.4 Acknowledge financial planning process		▨			
		11.2 ABCs of a Checking Account	11.2.1 Acknowledge purposes of checking account			▨		
			11.2.2 Shopping for cash, checking, or credit			▨		
			11.2.3 Recognizing the checking account application process			▨		
			11.2.4 Writing a deposit slip			▨		
			11.2.5 Depositing a check			▨		
		11.3 Budgeting	11.3.1 Recognizing the importance of the budget		▨			
			11.3.2 Building a monthly budget		▨			
			11.3.3 Recognizing steps to a balance budget		▨			
		11.4 Establishing Credit	11.4.1 Recognizing types of credit			▨		
			11.4.2 Recognizing sources of credit			▨		
			11.4.3 Recognizing safeguard			▨		

Unit	Title	Module	Activity	Level 1[1]	2[2]	3[3]	4[4]	Recommendations
			issues for credit application					
			11.4.4 Recognizing credit application process					
			11.4.5 Determining questions to ask for credit card shopping					
			11.4.6 Comparing critical factors for credit card purchases					Optional
			11.4.7 Depositing a check					

Unit Structure

Each unit has a cover page that includes a course description, goals for the unit, and resources needed. For each module, there is a list of objectives, followed by a context.

Objectives

Objectives direct students in the completion of each activity by providing goals and expectations. Objectives maintain direction and serve as a guiding tool in connecting ASPIRA's philosophies with each task.

Handouts & Resources Needed:

Handouts:

Under each module, a list of resources needed for the activities is included. Make sure to have all resources needed, including handouts that need to be duplicated, before starting an activity. The handouts are labeled to indicate module and activity number. For example, 1.1 refers to module one, activity one. Make sure you have the correct handout to provide to participants before making copies. In some cases, there are activities directed to high school students, while others are for middle school students. For example, in activity two of the Personal Growth Unit, Module two; (*Risky Situations*) the facilitator will provide the handout to the participants depending on whether they are middle or high school students.

Films/videos:

In all modules, the use of videos is suggested. Most videos are available from YouTube. To ensure access we have provided a link to the file and/or provide a QR Code to access the video using a smart phone. Please If you plan on using videos pre view them prior to introducing it to participants. These will allow you to identify important points and formulate questions to ask participants during the discussion. Make sure to have the proper equipment, such as a computer, projector, or DVD player.

Materials:

It is imperative that the facilitator plan accordingly and be prepared with all materials needed before each session. Having paper, pens or pencils and journals for all students is important. While other materials such as post cards, tape, crayons or color markers are not needed for all activities, having them accessible may be a good idea. Besides these general materials, the Personal Growth Unit requires other items such as string, earplugs or headphones, scarves and a rope. Make sure to have these items in order to carry out these activities as suggested.

Additionally, it is important for the facilitator to have a flip chart or a blackboard with its appropriate markers to take notes during discussions. Likewise, having a dictionary handy may be useful. It may be possible to access a dictionary electronically at http://www.merriam-webster.com/; however, a hardcopy is recommended. Whenever possible, expose students to the different computer applications. Some students may not have their own computer at home; encourage them to use the ASPIRA technology center or to visit their local libraries. Below are listed the materials needed to carry out the Curriculum activities.

- Sheet of paper- one for each participant
- Pens/pencils
- Journals – one per students
- Post cards
- Tape
- Crayons/color markers
- Flit chart/blackboard
- Dictionary
- Computers with access to the Internet
- Blindfolds (for Unit IV, Module #3)
- String (for Unit IV, Module #3)
- Earplugs or Headphones (for Unit IV, Module #3)
- Scarves (for Unit IV, Module #3)
- Rope (for Unit IV, Module #11)

Activities

All modules contain a series of activities. While it is encouraged that each activity be implemented, there is some degree of flexibility for the facilitator given time considerations. Additionally, there are some units that contain more advanced

activities, which can be implemented with participants who have been in the program for some time. Each activity is numbered and titled to reflect a given topic. Whenever possible, time limitations are suggested. Under each activity, the procedure is explained in a bullet point format. Note that each activity is initiated with an icebreaker and concluded with a debriefing. The facilitator is highly encouraged to take advantage of the icebreakers provided in Appendix I.

Context

The contextual framework provides an introduction to the participants that aids them in connecting the material to their everyday lives. By contextualizing activities, facilitators can enhance the learning experience by creating emotional and intellectual links between the students and the materials. In understanding how each subject affects our personal, cultural, and community experience we are encouraged to learn at a more meaningful level because we are, in fact, learning about ourselves.

Procedure

Facilitators are encouraged to use the procedures outlined in the Curriculum that serve as a guide for effective group process. Learning in groups promotes the exchange of diverse ideas, deepening the learning experience beyond the paper curriculum. These procedures encourage group participation and involvement through critical thinking activities pertaining to peer-interaction, self-reflection, and social and cultural awareness, all with the aim of being interesting and fun!

Icebreakers:

A list of icebreakers is provided in Appendix B for the facilitator to use at the beginning of each activity. Also consider using icebreakers that have proven successful in previous workshops. Icebreakers also serve as warm-up exercises, which increase positive group interaction. Moreover, icebreakers are especially useful for shy or introverted students as they help them to relax, gain motivation and to share with others.

Journaling:

Make sure to have participants write in their journals upon conclusion of an activity to respond to questions provided or to reflect on the activities. The reflective entry should combine what they have learned in the classroom from the activities and discussions and what they have experienced outside of the classroom that relates to the subject. The journals should

contain a personal philosophy of leadership, statements describing how they are achieving the stated course objectives, and analysis of and impressions of the activities. The last entry of the semester should be a summary discussing what they have learned about themselves and their own development as leaders. Explain to participants that you will be reviewing their journal entries. This is an excellent way to have participants develop their creative and analytical skills. Also, journaling helps students in self-reflection. Initially, it may be difficult for participants to engage in writing in their journals; emphasize the importance of recording their thoughts. Make sure to collect the journals bi-weekly or -monthly and respond to students' reflections. This will help to motivate them to continue to express their opinions, ideas and concerns.

Debriefing:

Debriefing after every activity and at the end of each unit is fundamental in a leadership development program. During debriefing, the facilitator provides an overview of the objectives for the activity. The facilitator summarizes what was examined during the workshop and highlights important areas covered. Debriefing also gives participants the opportunity to express their opinions and concerns or raise further questions. The facilitator may challenge participants by asking questions such as:
- o Can anyone give a description of their observations?
- o What did you learned from this activity?
- o Why is this issue important to us? What does it mean?

Once the debriefing takes place, give a brief overview of the activities for the next session and remind participants to complete their journal entries.

Homework Assignments

It cannot be emphasized enough how important it is for the facilitator to be prepared for the activities prior to the actual session. Some activities require participants to complete a homework assignment. Make sure to explain to the participants the purpose of a given assignment. Remind them that the next activity will be based on that assignment; thus, it must be completed in order to proceed with that activity.

Evaluation

In implementing the Curriculum, evaluation is a very important aspect of the program. Facilitators will need to ask participants to fill out a feedback form upon conclusion of each unit. The facilitator will also be asked to provide feedback about the effectiveness and adequacy of the activities in serving youth. The feedback form is included in Appendix C. The feedback gathered from these tools will allow ASPIRA to make necessary improvements on the Curriculum.

The ASPIRA Association

The ASPIRA Association is the nation's leading Hispanic youth serving organization. Established in 1961 as a 501(c) (3), ASPIRA is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching the education and leadership capacity of youth. ASPIRA serves over 55,000 youth and young adults in low-income communities each year through the ASPIRA Leadership Clubs and an array of after-school personal and career counseling, mentoring, tutoring, and academic enrichment programs.

Since its formation ASPIRA has grown from a small nonprofit agency in New York City to a national association with statewide Associate Offices in CT, FL, IL, MA, NJ, NY, PA, DE, and Puerto Rico, and a National Office in Washington, D.C.

ASPIRA's primary mission is to foster the socioeconomic development of the Latino community. To ensure the success of that mission, ASPIRA focuses on programming that encourages Hispanic youth to be aware of the needs, and potential of their community. Additionally, ASPIRA fosters a commitment for youth to use their skills to further the development of their communities. ASPIRA also promotes advocacy, community-based research and supports the Latino culture while preserving the use of the Spanish language.

Acknowledgement

ASPIRA is also currently working on the translation of the Curriculum into Spanish.
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Disclaimer

All names and examples provided in the Youth Leadership Development Curriculum and Facilitator's Guide are fictional. Any resemblance to actual individuals or their personal situations are coincidental. The information contained in this guide is provided exclusively for instructional purposes. The Facilitator's Guide is meant to be used as guidance; facilitators may adapt materials as needed.

References

Miller, Doug (1995). Group facilitating. *The Camping Magazine,* 67, 5, 28

Jankowska, Maja & Atlay, Mark (2008). Use of creative space in enhancing students' engagement. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 45, 3, 271

Appendix A:

Positive Youth Leadership Development

ASPIRA's work in youth empowerment is supported by a foundation of research related to youth leadership development.

The ASPIRA Process

ASPIRA has developed a highly successful model for intervention called the ASPIRA Process. The ASPIRA Process of leadership development can be described by three words: Awareness, Analysis and Action. To become effective leaders, youth must be aware of themselves – of their current situation and challenges, of their goals and aspirations, and of their potential for success and leadership – and be aware of the community that surrounds them. Once aware, youth must analyze themselves and their communities, become knowledgeable about them, and become able to propose solutions. Awareness and analysis however are not sufficient. Action must follow. Youth must not only be able to chart the course of action, but they must also engage in implementing solutions. This is an active process that applies equally to individual development as to social action. In this process, ASPIRA assists, supports and nurtures youth, providing educational opportunities, guidance and validation – all within the context of reinforcing pride in the student's cultural background and his/her self-esteem. Through the ASPIRA Process, young people work together, support each other, learn about and promote their heritage, and develop skills and commitment to serve their community. It also engages parents and families to become active partners in education. The ASPIRA mission of community development through youth empowerment addresses the needs of young people from a positive perspective of caring and confidence in their potential.

Youth Empowerment and Development

Youth empowerment is a process of human growth and development and a framework for youth services (Edginton & deOlivera, 1995). The youth empowerment approach promotes greater participation and involvement of youth in the public affairs of the community. Youth are not viewed as community problems, but as community assets and resources (Florida Tobacco Clearinghouse, 1999).

Through empowerment, youth are provided with opportunities to develop the competencies they need to become successful contributors to their communities (Pittman & Wright, 1991). Youth are empowered when they feel they have choices in life, when they are aware of the implications of their choices, when they make informed decisions freely, when they engage in action based on their informed decision, and when they become accountable for the consequences of their

actions (Morris, 1998). Youth who are focused on achievement work toward goals and avoid behaviors that would prevent attaining their goals (Hirschi, T., 1969).

Youth have identified the following factors that influence their feelings of empowerment: non-authoritarian adult leadership, being able to experience and exercise power, receiving education and training, participating in critical analysis of issues, experiencing an environment of safety, closeness and appreciation, being able to honestly express opinions and emotions, accepting diversity, developing a voice, and being able to take action (DiBenedetto, 1992). The following key elements are essential for effective youth development programs: a comprehensive strategy with a clear mission and goals; committed, caring, professional leadership; youth-centered activities in youth-accessible facilities; culturally competent and diverse programs; youth ownership and involvement, and a positive focus including all youth (National Youth Development Information Center, 2000).

Resiliency

Resilience has been identified as a characteristic of youth who, when exposed to multiple risk factors, show successful responses to challenges (Rutter, 1985; Hawkins et al., 1992; Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990; Werner, 1995, 1989). Research has shown that youth survive adversity when they are supported by caring and nurturing adults who help them develop a sense of purpose. Mentors and teachers can model caring relationships, maintain high expectations, and provide opportunities to participate and contribute. These factors buffer risk and enable positive development by meeting young people's basic needs for safety, love, a sense of belonging, respect, power, accomplishment, and learning (Benard, 1991).

At least 50 percent of vulnerable youth grow up to be successful and confident, competent, and caring in their personal attitudes and behaviors (Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1992). In a longitudinal developmental study of resilience, most successful youth had someone in their families, schools, or communities that modeled caring relationships, set high expectations, provided opportunities to participate, and received critical developmental support that shifted their life path from risk to resilience (Benard B. & Constantine, N., October 11, 2000).

Asset Building

Assets are positive experiences, relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible (Search Institute, 1990). The Search Institute developed a framework of developmental

assets – identifying internal and external resources that relieve adversity and help create successful decision-making behavior.

The model identifies four categories of external assets:

- Support. Youth need support, care, and love from their families and others, and they need organizations and institutions that provide positive, supportive environments
- Empowerment. Young people need to feel valued and contribute to their communities. For this to occur, they must be safe and feel secure
- Boundaries and expectations. Young people need to know what is expected of them and whether activities and behaviors are acceptable or unacceptable
- Constructive use of time. Young people need constructive, enriching opportunities for growth through creative activities, youth programs, congregational involvement, and quality time at home

The model also identifies four categories of internal assets.

- Commitment to learning. Young people need to develop a lifelong commitment to learning
- Positive values. Youth need to develop strong values that guide their choices
- Social competencies. Young people need skills and competencies that equip them to make positive choices, to build relationships, and to succeed in life

Positive identity. Young people need a strong sense of their own power, purpose, worth, and promise (Search Institute)

Youth with higher levels of assets are involved in fewer risk-taking behaviors and positive development (Search Institute 1996). For example, in a study of 6,000 ethnically diverse youth in grades six through twelve, assets contributed between 10 to 43 percent to the presence of thriving indicators for youth development, over and above other demographic variables. The research also found that some assets contributed up to 54 percent of the variance (Scales, Benson, Leffert & Blyth, 2000).

Other studies show that adolescents who report higher levels of these family and environmental supportive factors are less likely to engage in the use of alcohol and drugs or risky and violent behaviors (Benson, 1997; Bailey, 2000; Scales, et al, 2000). They are also more likely to achieve academically, have healthy lifestyles, and participate in community service (Benson, 1997; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Lerner, 1993).

The asset approach encourages youth to share their talents with their communities as suggested by Kretzman and Schmitz (1995). Cooperative Extension agents in other states have also utilized the approach (e.g. Perkins & Butterfield, 1999). This approach is also in line with the role of organizations such as 4-H that conducts educational outreach programs that can be instrumental in positive outcomes for youth (Snider & Miller, 1993).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to assessments that individuals make about themselves and the degree to which one is satisfied or dissatisfied (Beane, J.A., & Lipka, R.P., 1984). Self-esteem is identified in some studies as an important protective factor. Self-esteem is a particular way of experiencing the self that involves emotional, evaluative, and cognitive components (National Association for Self-Esteem, 2000). A study of teens in grades 7-12 found that having high self-esteem protected teens from emotional distress and from substance abuse (cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana), particularly for older teens (Resnick et al., 1997). Youth who value themselves appear more likely to resist peer pressure to engage in harmful behaviors (Scales & Leffert, 1999).

Youth Drugs and Alcohol

Research into risk and protective factors indicates that strengthening families, improving parenting skills, and helping families to establish strong, consistent norms about alcohol and other drug use can help prevent substance abuse, including underage drinking, as well as violence and other related problems. Drug prevention programs that concentrate on self-esteem, personal efficacy, decision-making and communication skills – rather than addressing the effects of the substances alone – not only potentially reduce an individual's likelihood to use and abuse substances but also their likelihood to be involved in other risky behaviors such as unprotected sexual encounters (Donnelly, Joseph, 2002)

Parent-Child Communication

Early and clear communications between parents and young people about sex is an important step in helping adolescents adopt and maintain protective sexual behaviors (Centers for Disease Control, 2000). There is considerable evidence that parent involvement leads to improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates, and that these improvements occur regardless of the economic, racial, or cultural background of the family (Flaxman & Inger,

1991). Youth ages 10 to 15 reported that their parents were good, credible sources of information on difficult issues such as AIDS, violence, sex, and alcohol (Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now, 1998).

In addition, a number of studies have been conducted in the Latino community about parental involvement. According to a survey from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, three out of four Latino adults say they need help in learning how to discuss AIDS with young people. A study conducted in 1998 found that Latino teens who talked with their mothers about condoms before their first sexual experience were three times more likely to use condoms than those who didn't talk to their mothers (Centers for Disease Control, 2000). Based upon research in preventing sexually transmitted diseases, it is recommended that both adolescents and parents be involved in HIV/AIDS education program design and that programs be behaviorally based, rather than simply offer information (Haffner, 1989). Programs involving families prevent children's drug use and reinforce and increase the benefits of family life overall (Jones, 1997).

Mentoring

Mentoring is defined as a supportive relationship between youths and adults, or an individual who offers support, guidance and concrete assistance as the younger partner goes through a difficult period, enters a new area of experience, takes on important tasks, or addresses challenges (Falxman, Ascher & Harrington, 1998). Data clearly show that many youths have a desperate need for positive role models, in part motivated by changes in the American family. The number of single-parent homes has radically increased, as have two-parent working families. More preventive care is needed, as are support networks to fill the void left by busy or absent parents. (Cave & Quint, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1990).

Mentored youth are 46% less likely to initiate drug use, skipped half as many days of school, felt more competent about doing schoolwork, and showed modest gains in their grade point averages compared to untreated controls (Grossman, J.B. & Tierney, J.P. 1998). Research shows that providing youth with consistent adult support through a well-supervised, frequently meeting, long-term mentoring relationship improves grades and family relationships and helps prevent initiation of drug and alcohol use (Tierney & Grossman, 1995). Mentoring that is focused on providing friendship for youth can lead to the development of strong relationships; and strong relationships can foster significant positive changes in youth (Morrow & Styles, 1995; Tierney & Grossman, 1995).

Community Service Learning

Service learning can be defined as a method under which the students learn and develop through active participation in organized service experiences that meet community needs. Community service projects are best when integrated to the academic curriculum and provide structured time for students to communicate about what they experienced during the service activity. Projects should provide young people opportunities to use acquired skills and knowledge and build on what is learned in school (National and Community Service Act of 1990). Service learning and school-to-work are designed to connect students with their communities. Both promote a learning approach through which students apply academic and vocational skills and knowledge to address real life situations while developing attitudes, values and behaviors that will help them to become informed citizens and productive workers (Briscoe, et al., 1996). Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process (Brown, 1998).

Self-confidence, competence, and empathy for others are some of the personal benefits students realize through service learning. By engaging in problem-solving and by working cooperatively and collaboratively with others, students are able to build skills needed for employment in today's workplace (Brown, Bettina L., 1998). Service learning engages students in the solution of the authentic problems of the community, engaging them in critical analysis and reflection as a means of developing in them a greater understanding of issues within their situational context (Eyler, et al., 1997).

Cultural Competency

Cultural competency is a process that allows people to develop and expand their knowledge, sensitivity, and respect for cultural diversity. Cultural competency can be defined as behaviors attitudes, and policies that will ensure that a system, agency, program, or individual can function effectively and appropriately in diverse cultural interaction and settings (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). An understanding of cultural values is an important part of cultural competence. It ensures an understanding, appreciation, and respect of cultural differences and similarities within, among, and between groups.

Youth Invulnerability

The concept of invulnerability is that adolescents take risks because they ignore or greatly underestimate the actual risks associated with risky behaviors. Adolescents characteristically believe that they are impervious to disease, accidents, and death (Hochhauser, 1988). Feelings of invulnerability and hopelessness among adolescents encourage risk-taking. Low self-esteem and inadequate self-efficacy are also associated with risky behaviors. Negative attitudes about sexuality in young adults have been found to interfere with sexual communication and the performance of prevention acts.

Understanding adolescents' risk perception is an important first step in prevention of risky behaviors among youth, because people act on their perceptions. To understand sexual risk-taking among adolescents, one must first understand adolescent risk-perception (Chapin, 2001).

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Appendix B:

Icebreakers

Below is a list of sample icebreakers for the facilitator to use at the beginning of the activities. You can also access icebreakers' books at your local library or visit the website. Make sure to read the ground rules for discussion before proceeding to the icebreakers.

Ground Rules for Discussion

1. All points of view are worthy of being discussed. Don't put down someone else's values or ideas. Insults are not allowed.

2. Respect the person speaking by giving him or her full attention. If you want to say something, raise your hand and wait to be called upon.

3. Questions are encouraged and may be asked at any time. There is no such thing as a dumb question. Questions encourage discussion and indicate a desire to learn more.

4. Everyone has the right to "pass" on answering questions or participating in activities that make them feel uncomfortable.

5. Facilitators may also choose not to answer a question in front of the entire class.

6. It is okay to blush, feel embarrassed, or not know the answers to the questions.

7. This classroom is a safe place to be you. Things you share with the class should be strictly confidential, however confidentiality is not guaranteed. What you say in the class should not be discussed outside the classroom.

8. Facilitators will also respect the confidentiality ground rule, except when they are required by law to disclose information, such as in cases of sexual or physical abuse.

Source: Healthy Oakland Teens Project Ground Rules (adapted 2000)

Power Ball Activities

Instructions to Facilitator

- Students should stand and form a big circle around the room
- Explain the rules listed below.
- The facilitator or youth volunteer will serve as the: caller" of a topic.
- The "caller" will choose a topic and announce it to the class, then throw the ball to someone in the circle for a response.
- After several people address that topic, move on to another topic
- Move from lighthearted to serious topics.

Activity Rules

- Read the activity rules to the class and write them where the students can read along as well:

    1. Whoever has the ball has the POWER
    2. The POWER bearer has the power to talk and share his/her ideas, feeling and experiences.
    3. The POWER bearer must talk and say his/her name. He/she may talk for a maximum of two minutes about the topic
    4. You can't speak unless you have the ball. You may raise your hand in order speak.
    5. The POWER bearer decides who speaks next, by throwing the ball to the next person.
    6. Only the "caller" calls out a topic to address. The "Caller" should call out several different topics before ending the activity.

Topics "Callers" Can Use

- If I had power, I would…
- If I could have complete control over my life, I would…

- A good friend will always…
- As a leader, I would…

Days of Our Lives

Instructions

1. Give each participant a piece of paper.

2. Explain the rules:
   - Draw pictures that tell the story of the "days of your lives" and put your name on it.
   - The drawings will be collected
   - Drawings will be redistributed randomly. (If you receive your own drawing, you should exchange with someone else or return it to the pile).
   - Then introduce the person whose drawing you have, and tell that person's story by interpreting the drawing.
   - The artist may not interrupt while the speaker is interpreting.
   - After each person finishes the introduction, the artist will have an opportunity to correct misconceptions.

3. Begin the activity by asking for a volunteer to start.

How I got My Name Activity

Instructions:

Ask students to form groups of two. Each pair will have three minutes to introduce themselves to their partner and share how they got their name. Then they will return to the large group, where they will introduce their partner and share what they learned with the group. Move on to the next topic after everyone has been introduced to the class.

A Community Service Experience

Instructions:

This icebreaker will open up a discussion and will give the facilitator an opportunity to discuss the value of community service. Ask participants to choose a partner and introduce themselves to their partners. Ask participants to share with one another an experience where they willingly assisted others in their community, school, or family. They should describe their community service experience and how they felt as they were going through it. They should record responses and share them with the rest of the group.

Favorite Things

Instructions:

1. Handout postcards to participants so that they can list their favorite things.
2. Organize participants into pairs.
3. Ask participants to share favorite things with their partners.

Baggage Claim

Instruction:

1. Pass out cards to participants and ask them to "pack their bags" by filling in the blanks.

2. Explain that they will now experience going to the baggage claim and accidentally picking up someone else's bag.
3. Ask participants to walk around the room, shaking hands and introducing themselves to other participants in the following way:

- The first time each person shakes hands with another person, both participants will introduce themselves and tell each other what is in their bags (based on the information they wrote on the card).
- The pair will then exchange bags and move on to greet other participants.
- As they greet other participants they will shake hands and introduce themselves but explain that they have the wrong "bags". They will then proceed to tell each other who their "bags" belong to and what's in them, using the information on the cards they have in their hands.
- After each meeting, they will "trade bags" and then move on to another participant.

4. At the end of three minutes, ask participants to stop.
5. If the group has twenty or fewer participants, you can ask participants to read the name of the person whose card they are holding, introduce that person by what's in their bag, and return the card to that person so that everyone will eventually be holding their own "baggage" again.

Three Pieces of Paper

Instructions:

- Provide paper to participants.
- Explain to participants that the quickest way to find out some things about another person is to ask them significant questions.
- Pass out the three pieces of paper to each participant.
- Ask participants to choose a partner who is someone they don't know or don't know well.
- Once partnered, ask participants to answer the follow question.
- Now tell them they have 3 minutes to have partner conversations, taking turns with questions and answers.

Questions:

- What are some of your favorite movies?
- What activities were you involved in during high school?
- What sports team do you root for?
- What's your favorite hobby?
- What are your favorite TV shows?

Quick Quotes

Instructions:

- Create a Quick Quotes Activity Sheet and copy for participants.
- Pass out a Quick Quotes Activity Sheet to each participant.
- Explain that there are times in each of our lives when a quotation provides the "Aha" or concept for awareness of our own context of living.
- Ask participants to choose one quote and highlight on the page or write a quote of their own that fits the context of their own life experience at the moment.
- Instruct them to write a few words for themselves that helps them explain the relevance of their quote.
- Ask each participant to share aloud the chosen quote and explain the relevance.

Letters to the Editor

Instructions:

1. Explain the topic of the meeting to participants
2. Explain to them that they may already have some opinions or reactions to the topic and that it is important to share them with others in the group.

3. Ask them to imagine that they've been given an opportunity to write a response to the "editor" of the program or idea.
4. Instructor them to write one-paragraph Letters to the Editor that they would be willing to share with the group. Explain that the letters should reveal their current thoughts and feelings about the topic.
5. Begin the activity.
6. After two minutes, ask them to take turns sharing their letters with the group.

Pictures Don't Lie

Instructions:

1. Make sure to have pictures to provide to participants for the activity
2. Organize participants into groups of two six.
3. Give each group a picture.
4. Tell groups they will have one minute to list the things they see happening in the picture.
5. When the lists are completed, explain that we all have a tendency to take assumptions about people and situations rather than sticking to facts. Some of the time, this is helpful; at other times, it creates difficulties.
6. Instruct each group to read each statement on its combined list and determine whether it is a statement of facto or an assumption.
7. When groups have finished or after about two minutes, ask participants for observations about the activity.

Share Wear

Instructions:

1. Organize participants into groups of six to twelve.
2. Explain the concept of shareware. Tell them that the name of this activity is share wear – emphasizing the variation in spelling- a similar concept but they won't need to create a product.

3. Explain that in their groups, each person will have a chance to tell a story about something that they are currently wearing. For example, they may tell a story about a belt or a suit that they bought recently, or a watch or other piece of jewelry.
4. Give an example of a story about something you are wearing.
5. Explain that they will have eight minutes to tell their stories. They should make sure that each one in the group is heard.
6. When eight minutes are up, ask for example of the pieces of clothing they used.

Telephone Game

Instructions:

- Ask participants to stand forming a circle
- Tell participants that they will be provided with a phrase and that they are to repeat (whisper) that same phrase to the participant next to them until all participants have a chance to receive and send that message. An example of a phrase could be: When you focus on the problem, the problem gets bigger. Make sure that the students to do not talk to their peers during this activity.
- Ask the last person what they phrase is?
- Tell them that this activity reinforces the importance of activity listening.

If I had it My Way

Instructions:

- Tell participants to say two things they would change beginning with the phrase: "It I had it my way". For example, if I had it my way, I would be rich and living in a mansion.

Just Like Me

Instructions:

- Tell participants that this activity consists of one person standing up and saying something they feel, did or would like to do and others respond "just like me" if the statement applies to them. For example, one person may say, "yesterday, I watched my favorite sport' team game". Then, another person (or more than one person) stand up and says, "Just like me".
- Then, more on to the next participant, until all get a chance to participate in the activity.
- Tell participants that this helps them learn more about their peers. They can learn that they have things in common with their peers.

Appendix C: Evaluation Forms

Evaluation Form for Student

Indicate three new things you learned about ASPIRA.

How will you use this new knowledge in the future?

Were the handouts useful?

How could this workshop have been improved?

Evaluation Form for Facilitator

1. Did the workshops run smoothly? Why

2. What aspects of the workshops did not work? What would you change?

3. Was it easy to understand?

4. How would you make it more culturally relevant?

5. What visuals would you add?

6. How would you make it more hands-on for youth?