



## **YALSA Guidelines for Youth Participation in Libraries**

### ***What is youth participation?***

Youth participation in libraries is the involvement of young adults in responsible action and significant decision-making that affects the design and delivery of library and information services for their peers and the community.

### ***Why is youth participation a value?***

Youth participation in library decision-making is important as a means of achieving more responsive and effective library and information service for this age group. It is even more important as an experience through which young adults can enhance their learning, personal development, and citizenship while making the transition into adulthood.

### ***How can youth participation be accomplished in your library?***

Youth participation in library decision-making requires that adults (librarians, administrators, members of the governing and advisory bodies) recognize that young adults can make a positive contribution, and that adults respect the rights of teens to participate in decisions on matters that affect them.

Projects involving youth should have the following characteristics:

- Be centered on issues of real interest and concern to youth
- Have the potential to benefit people other than those directly involved
- Allow for youth input from the planning state forward
- Focus on some specific, doable tasks
- Receive adult support and guidance, but avoid adult domination
- Allow for learning and development of leadership and group work skills
- Contain opportunities for training and for discussion of progress made and problems encountered
- Give evidence of youth decisions being implemented
- Avoid exploitation of youth for work, which benefits the agency rather than the young adults
- Seek to recruit new participants on a regular basis
- Plan for staff time, funds, administrative support, transportation, etc., before launching the project
- Show promise of becoming an ongoing, long-term activity



## Tips for Successful Youth Participation in Libraries

- 1. Time and day:** Have meetings at a time when most kids can come. You may wish to change your meeting time after your first meeting.
- 2. Frequency:** Meet frequently to hold the interests of the kids and to keep projects going. Print and distribute a schedule and try to stick to it.
- 3. Reminders:** Teens are forgetful and papers get lost. Phone messages and e-mail are part of their culture -- use them! Contact them the night before a meeting.
- 4. Record keeping:** Have a sign-in system to keep track of attendance. You can drop those that don't show according to your bylaws. Records are also needed for your program statistics and evaluation.
- 5. Goals:** Guide your group with some written goals that will help keep the group focused. Kids need to develop these with our assistance. Have small goals and large goals -- big events and activities that can be finished in a single meeting.
- 6. Mailing list:** Be sure you have a mailing or e-mail list so you can send information in written form when it is necessary.
- 7. Rules:** Kids need to develop rules about membership, speaking in meetings, and participation that can be part of the bylaws.
- 8. Incentives:** Food, food, food! Also nice is to have them design a logo and make t-shirts. Play games and give lots of small prizes. Keep it fun!
- 9. Parents:** Keep parents informed about the group and how it works. Send a letter to parents shortly after the group takes hold and let them know what's happening.
- 10. End of year:** Have a year-end party, which can be combined with a special event. Kids can decide on format and menu, but have some choices ready. Give out an award to everyone.



## **YALSA Guidelines for Youth Participation in ALA/YALSA**

**DEFINITION:** Involvement of young adults, ages 12 through 18, in responsible action and significant services for their peers and the community.

**INTRODUCTION:** Although the concept of youth participation is neither foreign nor new, YALSA recognizes the need for a framework to facilitate the process of having young adults, ages 12 through 18, participate in any American Library Association activities at the national level.

Each committee or program chair is responsible for assessing the potential for the involvement of young adults, setting parameters for participation that specify objectives and outcomes and providing a balance between committee and young adult input. Neither committee decisions nor program content will be made based solely on young adult input but through a combination of professional knowledge and youth participation.

**PURPOSE:** To solicit the input of young adults and promote their participation in the creation and development of library activities, programs and publications, thus insuring the relevance of these products and services to the population we serve.

**GOALS:** To organize and implement youth participation to support division and committee goals,

To collect a wide range of ideas from as diverse a young adult population as possible,

To create valuable experiences for the participating young adults in which they can gain knowledge and/or skills useful in future endeavors,

### ***Procedures for Conference participation:***

**Identification of youth participation groups near conference sites:** The Youth Participation Coordinator will make available to any ALA committee a list of local contacts six months prior to the event. Committees and programs are urged to draw from more than one group and to seek diverse input. Contact the Youth Participation Coordinator through the YALSA office at [YALSA@ala.org](mailto:YALSA@ala.org) or 1-800-545-2433 x 4390.

**Requests to attend:** Invitations to attend a committee meeting or participate in programs or other events will be extended by the committee chair.

**Registration:** Committee or program chairs should make name badges for young adults attending their programs, and send requests to the YALSA Office for guest exhibitor passes.

**Conference expenses:** Any expense relating to conference attendance is the responsibility of the youth participant, unless the division or unit has approved other arrangements.

**Evaluation:** As a part of the evaluation for programs and committee activities, chairs will assess the impact of youth participation in a report to the Youth Participation Coordinator.



## Potential Activities

- Creation of a YALSA teen advisory board
- Creation of an interactive Internet feature where teens can share ideas with each other and with librarians
- Training for youth as advocates for library services
- Development of materials to recruit for and inform about the library profession
- Observation of youth participation programs in conference city tours
- Involvement of local teens in planning and/or staffing exhibit booths
- Involvement of teens on the Local Arrangements Committee
- Involvement of teens in evaluating the market potential of library promotional materials
- Consideration of teens as presenters and participants in YALSA programs