Developing Youth Enrichment Groups for Museums

Dod March
Youth Programs Manager
Stepping Stones Museum for Children
2016
Youth Volunteering in a museum focuses on a few basic tracks:
* Volunteerism and community relationships
* Workplace readiness and responsibilities
* Imparting knowledge of exhibits to visitors

Youth Enrichment in a museum focuses not only on the above but additional tracks:
* Socio-emotional learning (SEL) of the participants
* Leadership opportunities
* Youth voice
* Opportunity to create a safe place
* Teamwork AND individuality
* Creativity
Benefits of Enrichment Programs

Association of Science-Technology Centers
(http://www.astc.org/resource/youth/index.htm#meeting)

- Intellectual and Education Development
- Socio-Emotional Learning
- Workplace Readiness and Community Involvement
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Intellectual and Educational Development:

• feel smarter and value education more highly
• hone their creative problem-solving skills
• perfect their critical thinking
• become literate in STEM-related fields
• eagerly receive information and support to help them build their future
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Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):

• enhance their communication skills
• develop positive peer support groups
• develop leadership skills and the confidence to use them
• become effective museum advocates/ambassadors
• discover the joy of helping and teaching others
• understand the value of teamwork
• realize they have a new place to call home
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Workplace Readiness and Community Involvement:

• seek out museum staff as mentors
• realize that they can have aspirations and achieve their goals
• appreciate their new opportunities to practice and master skills
• receive respect and recognition for their accomplishments
• appreciate the high expectations that museum staff have for them
• become more aware of skills they already have and learn new ones
• gain marketable work skills
• feel valued by a larger institution/community
• develop a code of ethics and a sense of responsibility to a larger community
Turning a Volunteer Program into an Enrichment Program

- Shake up the schedules by adding more options and reducing time spent in a single place.
- Create outside-the-box activities of which your group can take ownership.
- Create and maintain a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere.
- Nudge participants out of their comfort zone in relation to leadership and initiative. Don’t make them do anything that you wouldn’t do.
- Foster an environment that promotes friendship and teamwork.
- Seek out activities in the community for the participants to either assist with or take part in.
- Partner with schools to promote the message and mission of your program.
- Listen and provide participants with chances for their voice to be heard. Hear what they say. Strive to understand them by asking them questions about themselves.
- Don’t be afraid to “age in reverse.” Join with them. Treat them like the valuable young adults they are and not subordinates or “just kids.”
Resources

• Association of Science-Technology Centers
  http://www.astc.org/resource/youth/index.htm#meeting

• Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch

• The Volunteer Recruitment Book by Susan J. Ellis

• The Washington Youth Voice Handbook

• YOU and YOUR experiences!
• The youth in your program!