

Table 11. Youth Development Practices for Specific Age Groups

Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Creating a warm and welcoming environment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Greet every young person as he or she comes into the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Greet every young person as he or she comes into the program. ■ Create a group agreement for behavior with youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Greet every young person as he or she comes into the program. ■ Allow for peer time at the beginning of the program so young people can interact casually. ■ Stagger start times to accommodate other extracurricular activities and social exchanges.
Building supportive relationships and opportunities to belong		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create a program ritual such as a shared song or saying that you do at the beginning of each day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Invite youth to create names for activities or the program as a whole. ■ Ask youth to create a logo to represent the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Invite youth to create names for activities or the program as a whole. ■ Have young people form within-program groups based on interest.
Promoting positive behavior management		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create group agreements for how you want youth to behave. Ask youth, "How should we act together in this program?" Even young children will usually come up with a list that includes things like share, be nice, don't talk when it isn't your turn, and so on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Build in plenty of time for recreation and physical activity. ■ Provide outdoor team-building activities. Such activities teach cooperation, encourage creative problem solving, and provide new opportunities for leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop mentorship opportunities in which older youth pair up with younger youth. ■ Create opportunities for youth governance on behavior issues such as a peer jury.

Youth choice

- For ages 5 to 8, first expose them to a variety of activities. Then keep the choices simple. Provide choices *within* those activities.
- For ages 9 to 11, allow them to choose their activities, but provide clear procedures, because choice may be a new experience.
- Survey youth for their interests. Asking their opinions and offering choices that reflect their interests will help to keep them involved in the program.
- Survey youth for their interests. Asking their opinions and offering choices that reflect their interests will help to keep them involved in the program.
- Allow young people to create the array of choices and participate in the overall design of the program, where appropriate.
- Create opportunities for service learning. (See pages 136-138 for more information on service learning.) Teens indicate a strong preference for helping others. Have them brainstorm areas in which they feel they can make a difference in the community.

Decision-making

- Allow youth to make decisions within a range of choices, such as helping to choose from among three snack offerings the program should serve.
- Allow youth flexibility during the registration process (e.g., only register for one day a week or one semester per year).
- Allow youth flexibility during the registration process (e.g., only register for one day a week or one semester per year).
- Design a project that allows youth to leave a mark on the community or school, such as painting a bench or mural, creating a mosaic, or planting flowers.



Leadership

- Give youth opportunities to have jobs that are meaningful (e.g., taking attendance, distributing snacks).
- Create a youth council made up of youth to serve as advisors to your governing board.
- Make sure youth are represented on your advisory board. Make sure you are representing the young people you most want to reach, not the ones who are always involved.
- Invite youth to serve on a governance board and in program planning and evaluation processes.
- Provide opportunities for youth to help with your program. Older youth often can create meaningful and creative brochures, websites, public service announcements, and videos.

Reflection

- Have youth draw a picture of what they learned that day or how they are feeling at the end of the day.
- Offer youth a choice of two or three items to keep in their portfolio.
- Have youth write in a journal for five minutes at the end of the program about what they learned, enjoyed, and want to do in the next session. If youth are comfortable, journal reflections can be kept in the portfolio.
- Have a group discussion about the things youth are learning and how to extend their learning. For example, in an environmental program, youth could talk about ways they can help protect the environment at home.
- You might also ask youth to contribute two or three items of reflection to their portfolios. Youth can select what they do (e.g., write a journal entry, draw a picture).