

Youth Engagement: A Celebration Across Time and Culture

Framing the Issue



W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION
FROM VISION TO INNOVATIVE IMPACT

SEMINAR SERIES

An Agenda for Change



Without the active engagement of young people, even in the relatively short history of this country, the story of positive social change would be a very different one. Young people organized “Bacon’s Rebellion” in 1676 well before the war for independence. Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton were student leaders. Thomas Paine, great propagandist of the revolution, was a young person. Even Thomas Jefferson drafted our country’s Declaration of Independence when was a very young man. The Civil Rights movement of the late 1950s and 1960s was powered by young people who organized the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).¹ The young leaders of SNCC organized direct action and voter registration efforts in the Deep South where racism was most prevalent, elevating the importance of equality and justice in the minds of the American public and its government. Many of SNCC’s leaders, such as Congressman John Lewis and Children’s Defense Fund Founder and President Marian Wright Edelman, have become our country’s leading voices for civil rights and equality of opportunities.

In 1968, about forty thousand students on nearly one hundred campuses across the country demonstrated against the Vietnam War and against racism.² In 1960, a small group of young people formed Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and adopted The Port Huron Statement, written by student leader Tom Hayden. The manifesto urged participatory democracy, or the idea that all Americans, not just an elite group, should decide major economic, political, and social issues that shaped the nation. The statement also criticized American society for its focus on career advancement, material possessions, military strength, and racism. By 1968 some 100,000 young people around the nation had joined SDS.³



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¹ See History of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee at <http://www.ncsu.edu/chass/mds/sncchist.html>, Cozzens, Lisa, “Sit-ins,” Civil Rights Movement 1955-1965, 1997. <<http://www.watson.org>> (July 13, 2005)

Davis, Dernal, “When Youth Protest: The Mississippi Civil Rights Movement, 1955-1970,” Mississippi History Now, 2001. <http://mshistory.k12.ms.us/features/feature21/civilrights.html> (July 13, 2005).

² See SDS: Students for a Democratic Society at http://ma.essortment.com/sdsstudentsfo_rmsx.htm Retrieved July 15, 2005.

³ See Vietnam War Era Ephemera Collection at <http://content.lib.washington.edu/protestweb> Retrieved July 15, 2005.

Youth engagement did not stop in the 60s. Young people are continuing the tradition of citizen action using a variety of traditional and innovative strategies. For example, according to the report, the *Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait*, youth are volunteering at ever-expanding rates. During spring 2002, 15- to 25-year-olds reported volunteering at the rate of 40.2 percent over the previous 12-month period compared with a national volunteering rate of 31.7 percent in 2000.⁴

These examples are not isolated incidents. Young people have catalyzed and fueled social change movements throughout history and around the world.⁵ Their contributions of inspiration, creativity, and public work have laid the foundation for modern approaches to community-based problem solving, civic participation, and a range of social justice efforts that are cornerstones of our democracy.



This modern approach to youth engagement has the potential for profound effect in many communities and at all levels. But too often, history ignores or minimizes young people's contribution to social progress. The impact that young people have had across time and within many different cultures is only beginning to be recognized and embraced, even by social change organizers and leaders. What is crucially needed now is a deep exploration of the roles of young people in creating positive change. Such an exploration will generate lessons of inclusive engagement, inform current work, and inspire and empower young people well into the future.

This exploration of young people's place in society is the catalyst for an agenda for change. A healthy democracy requires that people learn, listen, dream, and work together as they unleash their collective potential to build the common good. When young people are excluded from participation in this dynamic, the potential for common good is deeply diminished. Despite a common misperception of today's youth as self-absorbed and uninvolved, in example after example, young people ages 15 to 25 demonstrate a strong desire to engage actively in the work of building a just national and global society. This high degree of youth involvement not only develops leadership and civic skills in young people, but also adds much needed energy and perspective into community change efforts, policy debates, and governance at all levels. Yet, in isolation, youth cannot engage fully and productively in their communities. Adult allies, youth-serving organizations, schools, and faith-based and governmental institutions play a critical role in supporting and empowering young people to engage in all aspects of civic life. Lasting community change is inclusive; it transcends traditional age, cultural, political, and institutional boundaries. It demands openness to new opportunities and fresh attitudes, and it builds on deeply-rooted traditions, experience, and history.



In a multicultural and multigenerational society, the creation of an agenda for community change requires collaboration and bridge building, and must offer opportunities for reflection on lessons learned. This agenda for change demands intention and commitment. It also requires conscious, organized efforts to bring together the considerable energy and wisdom of young people and adults who have done the work and contributed to change.

The Philanthropy and Volunteerism program area of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation hopes to contribute to this agenda for change through its 75th Anniversary seminar, Youth Engagement: A Celebration Across Time and Culture. The seminar will bring together a diverse community of youth leaders and their adult partners from across cultures and social movements. These groups will share and explore the lessons and experience of youth engagement from the past to the present. Participants from across the country will engage together using a multi-generational lens to reflect on and celebrate youth engagement over time, and in so doing deepen their understanding of contemporary cutting-edge work and opportunities to strengthen future youth engagement. The seminar will provide an unprecedented opportunity to evoke cross-generational, culturally diverse wisdom, ideas, experience, and energy to generate meaning and action. Beyond a simple exploration of ideas, the seminar will result in a very specific call to action, developed by seminar participants to call out the urgent need for local communities, organizations, and individuals across the country to pursue an even greater level of youth engagement in positive community change.

This event will build on the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's legacy of strengthening local philanthropy and volunteerism through youth engagement. It will bring together youth and adults from 14 community-level civic initiatives, and the 100 participants will reflect the rich cultural, ethnic and geographical diversity of the United States. Participants will be selected from the Kellogg Youth Innovation Fund sites, the Kellogg Leadership for Community Change Session II sites, and Battle Creek, Michigan.

The seminar will create opportunities for intimate, purposeful dialogue in small and large group formats. Diverse cultural approaches and discourse hold the potential to facilitate a deeper level of meaning and insight. The use of innovative methods is particularly important. Youth engagement does not occur in isolation; it is expressed in cultural and generational contexts whose boundaries are often not crossed by others from outside a particular tradition or cohort. This seminar will attempt to bridge these gaps, catalyze new dialogue, capture lessons, and create tools to inspire and equip local communities to increase youth engagement in community change efforts. And it will serve to sharpen the focus on this issue, drawing the attention of organizers, funders, scholars, and community leaders at all levels.



⁴ Lopez, Mark Hugo, "Volunteering Among Young People," The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. June 2003, Updated February 2004. <<http://www.civicyouth.org>> (July 27, 2005)

⁵ HoSang, D. (2003). Youth and Community Organizing Today (Occasional Paper No. 2). New York, NY: The Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing. Yates and Youniss, 1999

The Issue

The story of youth engagement is told in many contexts: The anti-war, civil rights, immigrant rights, and indigenous language movements are rich with examples of young people who served as crucial actors in creating positive change. There is much to be learned from those efforts. In the past, like today, simply volunteering was not enough – a passion for social justice guided these young people and their activism. They strove to transform their communities, not just serve them. They toiled to create a more equitable and inclusive society, not just support the status quo. Around similar issues and in diverse communities across the country, young people today build on this legacy of successful youth engagement. Yet few opportunities have existed, or exist today, for intergenerational dialogue that engages present and past activists in youth-led social change in collective exploring, honoring, celebrating, and learning.

A key element of successful forms of youth engagement has always been partnerships with adults that recognize the inherent value that everyone brings to the table. There is no universally accepted way to do this. Models and understanding of youth engagement and youth-adult collaboration have evolved and continue to develop. A recent “state of the state” report from Search Institute (2005) identified 10 current crosscutting themes.



1. Youth involvement is expanding beyond community service to emphasize democratic citizenship that embraces both individual rights and responsibilities and concrete group contributions for the common good.
2. Adults in multiple settings and at varying levels (local, national, and even global) have a primary role in creating opportunities for young people and supporting them in building their competencies as they simultaneously work for change.
3. Youth participation in partnership with adults can take varying forms and is shaped by the mission of the organization or initiative. There is not one prescribed way for youth and adults to partner in community and social change.
4. Increasing numbers of young people from marginalized and disenfranchised communities are becoming involved as leadership models begin to take into consideration both the challenges and strengths of these young people.
5. Young people’s awareness of social injustice within a community often serves to stimulate involvement and a desire for change. Investigating the history and ongoing impact of inequalities within a community can help young people focus their changemaking initiatives.
6. Emerging views of youth involvement represent a broadening of focus – from considering solely individual-level outcomes for participating youth to also examining changes in the external conditions that enable and support youth involvement and the organizational and community-level impacts of youth involvement.



7. As adults and youth talk about making change, they are giving new meanings to words like “leadership,” “philanthropy,” and “empowerment.” The work will be strengthened if players (youth, adults, theorists, and funders) begin to coalesce around a common language that represents the best ideas, approaches, and elements of good practice.
8. The prevalent perception that youth development occurs only in programs may limit the creativity of youth and adults in moving beyond a given program, activity, or curriculum to the idea of community engagement and civic activism.
9. For youth and adult partnerships to become a way of life in communities and a standardized practice within programs, a great deal of work must be done to change adults’ perceptions of youth and to create awareness of the positive changes youths are capable of making.
10. The growth of youth involvement is occurring at the grassroots level in communities, and there is a continued need to strengthen its infrastructure and sustain and spread the work.⁶



In this dynamic context, the work proposed for this seminar can have a profound impact in catalyzing new thinking, models, and tools. The seminar itself begins to address the need for genuine opportunities for youth and adults to reflect on successful strategies for youth engagement. Youth engagement alone is crucial, but it will only reach its full potential as an agent of change in a multicultural, multigenerational society if it becomes more intentional, better documented, and more strongly supported. As youth and adults share lessons learned, and create visions for new engagement and growth, they will refine strategies for youth engagement such that it can become an essential, effective part of the fabric of young lives and social change movements across cultures, classes, and generations.

Within that vision – an integration of genuine, effective youth engagement in social change – lies the seed of tremendous positive development for young people, and for the communities and larger cultures in which they live.

⁶ Search Institute. (2005) The Power of Youth and Adult Partnerships and Change Pathways for Youth Work. Battle Creek, MI: W.K Kellogg Foundation

The Opportunity

The seminar provides an opportunity to imagine, test, understand, and share creative methods that foster youth engagement and ensure that youth-adult collaboration becomes a cultural norm and an everyday civic activity. This is especially true for community change projects which, because of changing age demographics, have the opportunity to rely more on the involvement of youth and elders as agents of change. The opportunity is to enlarge the impact of effective youth engagement exponentially, to “bring it to scale” such that the successes of single communities feed the success of many others, as communities with various and similar challenges overcome them through connection with others doing this work.

Thanks to the hard work and commitment of young people over time, many social injustices that young people of today have difficulty imagining were challenged and overcome. Cross-generational dialogue within the seminar will create the climate for such stories to be brought to light, transforming the lessons from those successes into opportunities and insights for today.

It is clearly time to connect and leverage the existing yet isolated experience, talent, and passion of youth and elder social activists. Doing so will create a new level of collective meaning and insight that could result in scalable practical tools and lessons to expand, inform, and strengthen pathways for youth-led social change in the next generation. This is the work of ordinary young people, with individual passion and motivation, who catalyze the cooperation and engagement of others for change. Their stories and results are powerful.

Youth-adult partnerships in collective learning and action promote leadership that is:

Effective, responding to diverse community needs and building the capacity of individuals and institutions to ensure long-term sustainability of their work.

Inspiring, as people realize they need one another, and as the opportunity to work in cross-generational partnerships emerges, hope, new understanding, and previously unknown dreams and possibilities are unleashed.

Mutually interdependent, where the “declaration of interdependence” between individual partners spreads to an understanding of the importance of crossing boundaries and contributing to the common good.

Strong relationships between youth and adults create patterns of opportunity for idea-sharing, dreaming, and decision-making that, when infused into community change initiatives, can and has led to powerful results.

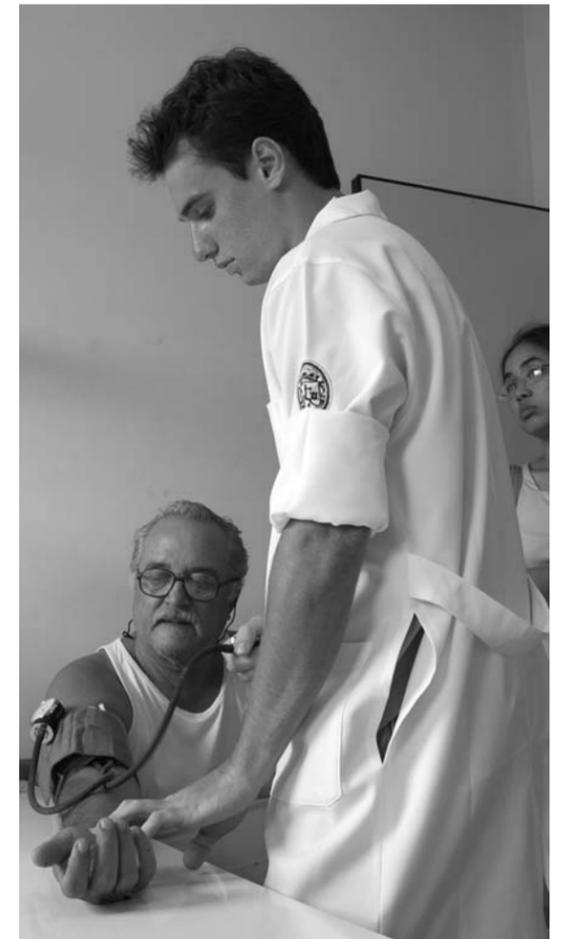


There is a rich history of youth engagement across time and culture that demands to be surfaced and celebrated. The participants in this seminar are exemplars of this work. This W.K. Kellogg Foundation 75th Anniversary seminar provides a unique opportunity to reframe the public perception of the role of young people in community leadership. It will also provide a forum to increase awareness of how the Foundation's support of youth engagement over time and its current far-reaching vision for youth engagement – involving contributions of time, treasure, and know-how – is as ambitious now as it was in the past.

Some may ask why it is important to reframe the issue of youth engagement to include cross-cultural collaboration and youth-adult partnerships. There are numerous drivers for this paradigm shift; among them:

1. Changing public perception will influence public discourse for youth advocacy, leading to increased funding and new opportunities.
2. New frames will create the climate for youth agencies and communities to re-examine the pathways and opportunities they create for youth engagement, and find more effective ways to engage young people in creating change on a personal, organizational, and community level.
3. Issue-focused community agencies (for example, organizations focused on environmental awareness, social service, etc.) will use the new frames to re-examine the role of young people in their agency and expand opportunities to engage young people as contributors to their work.

This particular moment in history, and its nascent scholarship and media attention with regard to youth engagement, represents a unique opportunity to dive deeply into the issue, to articulate successes, share energy, hope, passion, and practices. The 75th Anniversary seminar will engage that energy, and develop further the already promising practices employed by youth activists and adults across the country.



Promising Approaches

As noted earlier, one of the primary components of effective youth engagement has been partnership with elders and other adult community leaders. The crucial word is partnership, in which all perspectives are valued, and young people's ideas, wisdom and energy are genuinely and passionately represented at the table. In its 2005 report on the state of youth engagement, Search Institute describes eight pathways for youth engagement with youth adult partnership at the core. (See diagram 1)

Each of these approaches effectively engages young people using youth-adult partnerships as a core principle. The following section, which briefly defines each pathway, is largely adapted from Search Institute's 2005 publication: *The Power of Youth and Adult Partnerships and Change Pathways for Youth Work*.

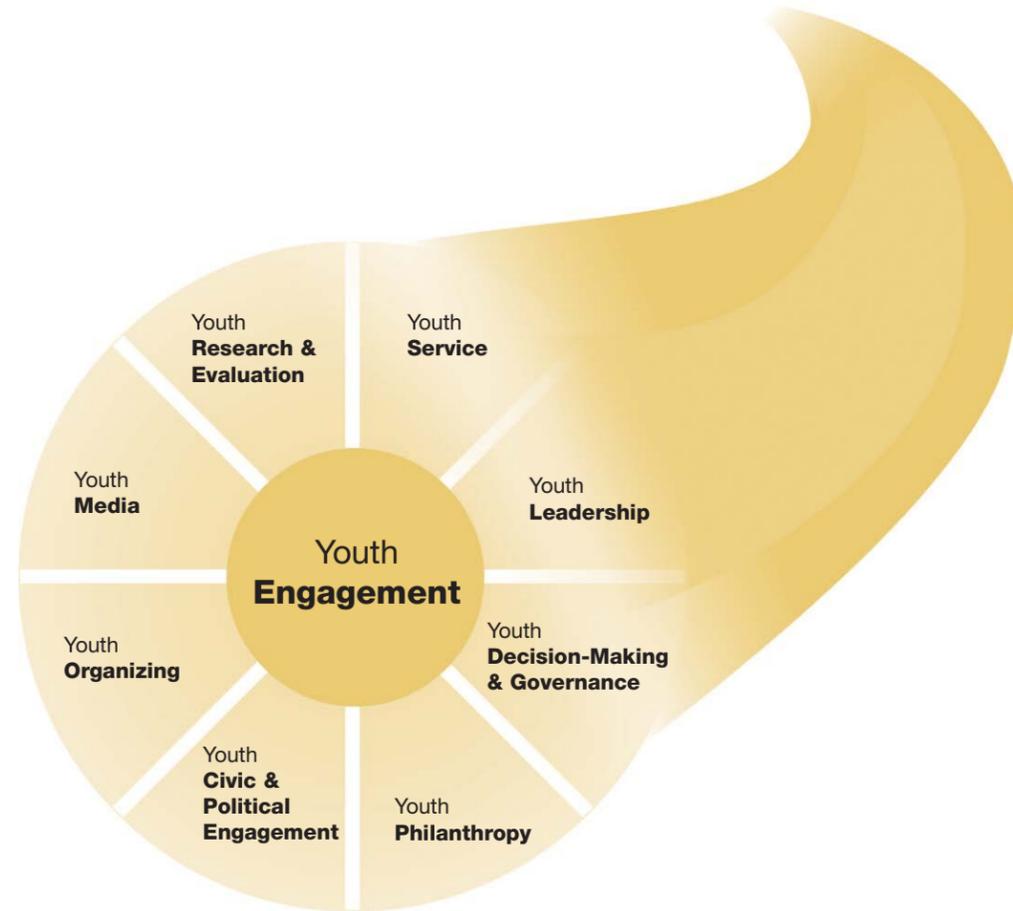


Diagram 1: Eight Pathways to Youth Engagement⁷

⁷ Search Institute, p. 1

Youth Service

According to Search Institute, youth service is defined by three terms that are often used interchangeably but together contribute to a stronger understanding of what youth service looks like and how it is practiced by young people in communities across the country.

Volunteerism is defined as the “performance of formal service to benefit others or one’s community without receiving any external rewards.”⁸ Examples are often somewhat limited in scope, task-specific rather than necessarily part of a larger community-development strategy, and can be time-limited, such as feeding the hungry, cleaning up neighborhood parks, reading to children, assisting seniors, or raising funds for disaster relief.⁹

Community-service is more location-specific, with Search Institute defining it as “volunteerism that occurs in the context of community action taken to meet the needs of others or to better the community as a whole.”¹⁰ Despite some potentially negative connotations with this term due to its linking with punitive measures imposed by courts that require non-violent offenders to perform unpaid, often menial tasks within their community, in its best form, this deliberate approach encourages participants to work together in solving community problems and improving quality of life. When done well, community service can improve both a young person’s understanding of his or her community and the role that all individuals can play in creating positive change. As a side benefit, youth involvement in community service often helps older community members shift their thinking to see young people as a source of solutions rather than part of a community’s problems.



Service-learning is defined by The National Service-Learning Partnership, a nationwide network of organizations and individuals advancing the incorporation of service-learning into the core of every young person’s education, as “a teaching method that engages young people in solving problems within their schools and communities as part of their academic studies or other type of intentional learning activity. Service-learning helps students master important curriculum content by helping them make meaningful connections between their studies and the many potential applications of those studies. Service-learning also helps young people develop a range of service skills, from acts of kindness and caring, to community stewardship, to civic action.”¹¹ According to researchers, service-learning is characterized by mutual benefit or reciprocity and learning, where all parties involved learn, grow, and benefit as a result of the experience. A good service-learning program helps participants see their questions in the larger context of issues of social justice and social policy, rather than in the context of charity (Kendall, 1990).¹² As Hernan Melara of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in the Bronx, New York, said, “I grew up here, I feel safe here, I’ll stay here. This is my community. Nothing gets done here without my permission.”¹³ This sense of ownership and responsibility grows out of service-learning thinking of this nature: “This is not for unfortunate others, or simply myself; it is for the community and for change.” In this context, young people internalize the lessons of engagement such that they are transformed into lifelong civic and social justice leaders.

⁸ National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. (2005). Glossary. Retrieved February 14, 2005 from www2.servicelearning.org.

⁹ Search Institute, p. 73

¹⁰ Search Institute, p. 73

¹¹ See “About Service-learning” at www.servicelearningpartnership.org Retrieved August 11, 2005.

¹² Search Institute, p. 74

¹³ Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (2004) Creating change: How organizations connect with youth, build community and strengthen themselves. Takoma Park, MD: Author.

Youth Leadership

Youth leadership is somewhat difficult to define, as there are ongoing debates on defining the word “leadership” in itself. Leadership “on the ground” is often defined as a process by which a person influences others to accomplish a mission, task, or objective. A person carries out this process by applying his or her leadership attributes, which include beliefs, values, character, and skills.¹⁴ For many, youth leadership focuses not only on the qualities that a young person displays but also on learning and the development of skills that are uncovered, practiced, and improved over time. In their paper, Search Institute authors write, “Youth leadership means having the competencies to solve social problems, the consciousness to understand them, and the compassion to do something about them.”¹⁵ According to many researchers, young people’s leadership skills are developed through activities that encourage them to “participate in group processes, build consensus, and subsume personal interests and ideas to those of the collective.”¹⁶ For the individual, positive outcomes of this leadership development include improved networking, collaboration, communication, and group decision-making skills,¹⁷ but these benefits are not solely focused on the individual. The practice of engaging young people not just as passive recipients of service but as leaders in their communities has led to distinct and powerful examples of positive change for communities, organizations, and the adults who work with young people, as well as the field of leadership as a whole.

Youth in Decision-Making

Youth in decision-making, often also defined or explained as “youth governance,” focuses on the ways young people are involved in decision-making efforts at multiple levels of an initiative or organization. It can include advising the individuals or groups that hold the ultimate decision-making responsibility¹⁸ as well as opportunities in which young people are the ultimate decision makers. Youth decisions may be administrative (for example, hiring staff, designing programs, or conducting a needs assessment) or operational (leading youth groups, training volunteers, etc.).¹⁹ Some refer to “youth in decision-making” as “a variety of efforts to engage young people in any level of determining outcomes or decision-making. Decision-making can be related to an issue, a project, a program or an organization.”²⁰



Youth Philanthropy

Youth philanthropy is defined as “young people giving of time, talents and treasures for the common good.”²¹ It combines the unique qualities of youth-to-youth support and training to catalyze increased civic action in the community. An example of these qualities is the Michigan Community Foundation Youth Project, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, in which youth are trained in grantmaking and then “make grant recommendations, based on local youth needs and priorities, using income from the permanent youth fund, and to advocate for ‘youth as resources’ to the community.”²² Youth philanthropy may involve young people helping with traditional fundraising and grantmaking, but it often means more. It can include the ways youth share their time and gifts for the larger good, versus only their “treasures” or financial and material resources. Janet Wakefield, co-director of the Community Partnership for Youth and a national leader in the area of youth and philanthropy, passionately advocates for this broader definition, so that all young people (and people in general) begin to view themselves as philanthropists. The more expansive definition – giving of one’s time, talents, and treasures – enables young people to be involved philanthropically whether or not they have personal financial resources to contribute. It is also a natural extension of young people’s interests and willingness to give to others and the community at large.²³



Youth Civic and Political Engagement

Despite a recent and timely emphasis on voting, there is much more to youth involvement in civic and political affairs than the relatively simple and straightforward exercise of enfranchisement. Broadly speaking, **youth civic engagement** embraces the belief that all individuals can and should meaningfully contribute to the betterment and well-being of their community,²⁴ or what youth development researchers call “being able to influence choices in a collective action.”²⁵

Researchers identify three broad dimensions of civic and political engagement: *Civic activity* as “things people do to help in their communities or ways in which they contribute to charities,”²⁶ *electoral activities* as activities that are undertaken during campaigns and elections, and *political voice*, which involves efforts to express political positions on social and economic issues.²⁷ This involvement leads to powerful results for young people, organizations, and communities. As Susan Jennings of University of Maine, Oxford County Cooperative Extension said, young people “explain their work as their passion. They see themselves as valuable in this community and know they have the power to make change happen.”²⁸

¹⁴ Search Institute, p. 104

¹⁵ Irby, M., Ferber, T., & Pittman, K. (2001). Youth action: Youth contributing to communities, communities supporting youth. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment. International Youth Foundation.

¹⁶ Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (2003). Lessons in leadership: How young people change their communities and themselves; an evaluation of the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative. Takoma Park, MD: Author.

¹⁷ Tice, K.E. (2004). Leadership, volunteerism and giving: A longitudinal study of youth grantmakers (1993-2003). Grand Haven, MI: Council of Michigan Foundations.

¹⁸ Search Institute, p. 139

¹⁹ Zeldin, S., McDaniel, A.K., Topitzes, D., & Calvert, M. (2000). Youth in decision-making: A study on the impact of youth on adults and organizations. Takoma Park, MD: Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development.

²⁰ Justiniano, J. & Scherer, C. (2001). Youth voice: A guide for engaging youth in leadership and decision-making in service-learning programs. Washington, DC: Points of Light Foundation.

²¹ Hoover, A.G. & Wakefield, J. (2000). Youth as philanthropists: Developing habits of giving and service. Fort Wayne, IN: Community Partnerships with Youth.

²² See Youth Grantmakers at <http://www.youthgrantmakers.org/default.htm> Retrieved August 12, 2005.

²³ Search Institute, p. 170

²⁴ Search Institute, p. 197

²⁵ Camino, L., & Zeldin, S. (2002). From periphery to center: Pathways for youth civic engagement in the day-to-day lives of communities. Applied Developmental Science, 6(4), 213-220.

²⁶ Keeter, S., Zukin, C., Andolina, M., & Jenkins, K. (2002). The civic and political health of the Nation: A generational portrait, available at http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth_index.htm

²⁷ Andolina, M., Keeter, S., Zukin, C., & Jenkins, K. (2002). Searching for the meaning of youth civic engagement: Notes from the field. Applied Developmental Science, 6(4), 189-195.

²⁸ Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (2004)

Youth Organizing



The Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing defines **youth organizing** as:

An innovative youth development and social justice strategy that trains young people in community organizing and advocacy, and assists them in employing these skills to alter power relations and create meaningful institutional change in their communities. Youth organizing relies on the power and leadership of youth acting on issues defined by and affecting young people in their communities, and involves them in the design, implementation, and evaluation of these efforts. Youth organizing employs activities such as political education and analysis, community research, campaign development, direct action and membership recruitment.²⁹

Experts and practitioners have generally agreed upon a number of guiding principles for youth organizing. They are predicated upon a fundamental respect for the customs, traditions, and folkways of youth culture. Youth organizing creates opportunities for youth to discuss and reflect on their direct experience with acts of discrimination, and to determine tactical and structural solutions to reconciling those injustices.³⁰ And at its core, youth organizing is about combating institutional racism, classism, and oppression often stemming from unjust public policies at the local and state levels.

Youth Media

Youth media has been used to refer variously to media influence on, media marketed to, and media literacy of youth,³¹ but the Search Institute advocates the definition in which youth media refers to media that are imagined, produced, and distributed by youth. Fundamental to this definition of youth media is the active and engaged role of youth. From this perspective, youth are not passive consumers of television, video, and print media. Rather, they are the content creators and are engaged in all aspects.³² Youth involvement in media can take many forms: developing youth as media activists and leaders, building the media capacity of youth organizations and the youth movement to support organizing campaigns, increasing strategic media coordination between youth organizations, building long-term relationships between youth and news media outlets to improve coverage of young people and youth issues, and organizing youth-run campaigns that help hold the media accountable to the public.³³



Youth Research and Evaluation

Concepts such as **youth participation in community research and evaluation**, **youth-led research**, **youth-led evaluation**, and **youth-led research and evaluation** are commonly used to describe the phenomenon of young people's engagement and assumption of leadership roles in community studies. Youth research and evaluation is a powerful strategy used to engage young people in the exploration of root causes to community issues and provides young people with processes to define and implement solutions. According to proceedings from a 2002 symposium on youth participation in community evaluation research held at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin:

Youth participation in community evaluation research is conceived as a democratic process that seeks to equalize power between youth and adults, recognizes their respective roles and responsibilities, and places special emphasis on involving those youth that are traditionally underrepresented.³⁴

Youth-adult partnerships are not easy. They require work, commitment, and an openness to learn and share that is often challenging for adults as well as young people. But community experience and emerging scholarship indicate that these practices – strategies that engage the full potential of all people regardless of age, culture, or background – have the potential to create powerful change. Youth and adult participants in the 75th Anniversary seminar will bring stories of that change with them – stories of schools made safer, rivers cleaner, people prouder of themselves through revitalized culture, and the shift of entire criminal justice and social welfare systems toward mutual respect and sustainable change. These are the results produced by effective youth engagement, results that have been supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation over time.



²⁹ Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families. (2004) Focus on youth organizing, (retrived on-line July 19, 2005, at http://www.gcyf.org/pubs/fax/Year2004/11_Nov/v8_Issue_November_2004.htm)

³⁰ Search Institute, p. 226

³¹ Campbell, P.B., Hoey, L., & Perlman, L.K. (2001). Sticking with my dreams: Defining and refining youth media in the 21st century. Retrieved on-line at http://www.campbell-kibler.com/youth_media.html.

³² Search Institute, p. 245

³³ See the Youth Media Council Introduction at <http://www.youthmediacouncil.org/>. Retrieved August 23, 2005.

³⁴ Checkoway, B., Dobbie, D., and Richards-Schuster, K. (2003, Spring) *Involving Young People in Community Evaluation Research*. *Community Youth Development Journal*, 4(1).

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Commitment

Core values of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation maintain that all people have the inherent capacity to effect change in their lives, in their organizations, and in their communities. The Foundation respects individuals and values their collective interests, strengths, and cultures. We believe innovation of thought and action leads to enduring and positive social change in both formal and informal systems. Both young people and elders in a community regularly demonstrate this capacity to effect change and are increasingly behind community-led innovation. Often representing those with the least to lose, they dare to speak their minds openly and, in doing so, push the comfortable boundaries of “what’s always been done.” Out of this willingness to take risks, innovation is born and both young people and elders find themselves squarely in the middle of community change efforts. Yet, the quiet gift to uncover is that people’s engagement often continues from one issue to the next as they hold a vision not of what their community is but of what their community can be.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has long shown its commitment to enhancing this vision of community by promoting youth engagement in philanthropy and volunteerism. Current programming is focused on building a mutually responsible and just society in which all have the ability and means to contribute to the common good. We believe that everyone gives in various ways – time, money, and know-how. Therefore, our programming activities seek to unleash resources by supporting the emergence of new leaders and donors, creating and sharing knowledge, and building tools to advance the effectiveness and innovation of the philanthropic sector. Key target populations include youth, women, and communities of color.

We hope that the experience and discourse of this seminar will serve to:

1. Increase access, visibility, and engagement of the contribution of young people’s time, talent, and know-how to the common good.
2. Increase collaboration among the youth and adults in local change efforts.
3. Surface innovative ways to foster youth engagement as an effective method of addressing locally identified issues and creating positive change.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is a historical proponent of helping people help themselves. The grantmaking strategy of *Unleashing Resources* adopted by the Foundation’s Philanthropy and Volunteerism team continues to work to increase the access, visibility, and engagement of young people in philanthropy through a variety of locally-funded projects and national initiatives that provide local leaders with the tools and resources to create positive change. The impressive experience and impact of these local efforts can serve to inspire and educate others with regard to the benefits and potential of increasing access and opportunities for youth engagement.



Expected Seminar Outcomes

Through this seminar, we seek to build on youth engagement experiences, evoking meaningful cross-generational and cross-cultural dialogue that inspires increased youth-adult collaboration and answers key questions such as:

- How can dialogue be sparked between youth and elder agents of change on a local level in order to foster community-based intergenerational engagement for change?
- What is the opportunity created when the “old” story of youth engagement is woven together with the “new” of today’s youth? What sort of story can youth and elders co-create for the future?
- What are the lessons of youth engagement across time and culture? How can these be applied in today’s context?
- What are the barriers and challenges to youth-adult collaboration, and how can these be overcome?
- What concrete actions can seminar participants take to increase youth-adult collaboration in addressing community issues?

Youth and adult community leaders are poised to be age and culture boundary crossers, working together to foster innovative, collaborative approaches to community action that build on the experience of the past and reflect today’s reality. This seminar, which will begin to address these questions, will allow organizations, individuals, and communities from across time and culture to effectively harness the power of youth engagement to create positive change both of individual and local scale.

Inspiration will be the undertone of this 75th Anniversary seminar, and it will be easy to build on. Participants will do so with their stories, successes, hard won lessons, questions, and cultures – each bearing unique tones and threads that add to the color of the event.

There will be focused conversation, carefully constructed opportunities for dialog, and sharing of concrete, promising practices. In the process, relationships will deepen in such a way that real cross-cultural and cross-generational interactions will happen. In that context, an understanding of the realities and potentials of youth engagement will emerge. This understanding will lead to a whole new conversation – a reframed dialog and vision for youth engagement calling for positive social change for years to come.



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