



FACTSHEET

Positive Youth Development: A Core Foundation for Creating Leadership Opportunities For Marginalized Youth in Urban Communities

Content developed from information in the report *Changing Leaders, Leading Change: A leadership development model for marginalized youth in urban communities* by Rebecca Houwer, YouthREX Knowledge Exchange Manager.

Positive Youth Development is a framework that recognizes the internal and external assets of youth development by focusing on an individual's strengths rather than their deficits. Rather than view youth as "risks" or "problems", PYD seeks to empower and acknowledge existing assets of youth that lead to positive pro-social outcomes while evaluating systemic barriers which limit this process.

Critical Positive Youth Development

Here at YouthREX, we've expanded the definition to PYD to what we call Critical PYD. In addition to what we've already defined as PYD, Critical PYD intentionally recognizes 'isms,' directly engages with structures that limit opportunities and seeks to change these structures. Social justice is a key element of Critical PYD.

How can I integrate a social justice approach to my Critical Positive Youth Development program?



Evaluate and discuss how structures and operations of power impact youth developmental opportunities within your program.



Help youth understand how racism, sexism, poverty, unemployment, and other isms impact their lives and communities.



Encourage more system level changes that do not problematize individual experiences but rather creates more collective responsibility for changes in youth development.

What are the "Big Three" design features of an effective Positive Youth Development program?



Youth have opportunities to develop caring relationships with non-familial adults.



Youth have opportunities not only to engage and inform program activities but also to actively lead them.



Youth programs nurture the development of core life skills such as job searching or learning how to cope with disappointments or failures.

How can I enhance Positive Youth Development in my youth leadership development framework?



Create strong relationships between youth and non-family adults. Youth need adults in their lives who help them feel cared for and valued – someone who they can turn to when they need support or a listening ear.



Engage youth in program design and decision making processes that help youth exercise their power and voice to help positively influence themselves and their communities. Youth want to make contributions. They want to be involved in decisions that affect them and they want to be heard.



Provide youth with intentional skill building opportunities. Providing skill-building opportunities bolsters self esteem and helps youth become more equipped to contribute to their communities.



Create and set high expectations for youth.

Believe that youth are capable of making positive changes in their world and have the potential to make significant changes.