

Best Practices for Positive Youth Development

Youth thrive when programs and settings...



Balance structure (programming) and freedom (informal social time)

- Build in fun and time to “hang out”
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Set clear, fair and high expectations

- Support authentic two-way communication and relationships with supportive adults
 - Create opportunities to develop and strengthen close relationships with peers that support healthy behaviours, positive social values and norms
 - Build in clear goals, winnable and/or meaningful challenges, immediate feedback
 - Focus on and reward effort, practice, improvement and enjoyment over “natural” abilities and performance level
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Provide opportunities to develop skills and experience mastery

- Give priority to interactive/experiential (hands-on) learning over instruction
 - Help youth meet school requirements (e.g., community service)
 - Build experience (resume) for future jobs or education
 - Support the discovery and pursuit of passions – use an individual approach to develop strengths and interests
 - Provide opportunities for youth to accomplish something that matters
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Honour personal connections to a shared idea or cause, and strengthen cultural connections

- Create and encourage opportunities to experiment and to reflect on “who I am and who I want to be” as an individual, and as a member of a group or the community at large
 - Build in meaningful real-world contributions
 - Ensure youth experience a sense of belonging and “mattering”
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Share decision-making on matters that affect them

- Provide authentic opportunities for the youth voice to be heard
 - Create opportunities for youth to experience autonomy, empowerment, leadership
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Forge strong links with and complement family, school and broader community