



What About Teens? Community Meetings

October 11, 2005
Burlington, Vermont

What do you notice about teens?

Kids falling into a “gap”
Teens need more support
Adults not seen as a resource by teens
Create more opportunities for adult / teen interaction
Adults confuse teens about wanting independence and not letting them experiment
Adults are more “hands off” once kids get to middle school
Hard for teens to be “put on the spot” to talk
Kids fending for themselves
Parents don’t help teens with high school homework
Kids who drop out aren’t reached out to
Teens breaking away from parents, getting ready to be independent
Getting ready for “the real world”
Teachers don’t understand that they can share – “be human”
Disrespect both ways – teens toward adults and vice versa
Fear between adults and teens
Language implies that we’re enemies, i.e., “the war on drugs”
Fear breaks down communication between teens and adults
Limited opportunities for interaction

What do adults want teens to know?

Fear – teens going to places that adults have no control over
“We don’t always know the next step”
Trust that sometimes adults “do know”
There is no script for parents
You always want the parent you don’t have

What do teens want adults to know?

Under a lot of pressure
Overwhelmed
We can be trusted
There’s a time to be a parent and a time to be a friend, need more than just parents
“We don’t always know”
It’s different now than when adults were young

Adults share their own teen experiences and don't expect teens to learn on their own
Teens are individuals, we need to make our own mistakes
Success defined as fame or money
Might not tell teachers as much because they write recommendations
Pressure to be / stay at a high level
"If we fail, it's our choice"
Need time to process our day when we get home – don't want to talk immediately
Our minds don't rest
We know you're there if we need you

How does your community treat teens differently based on gender, socio-economic background, and racial, sexual or ethnic minority?

Parents disown gay / lesbian youth, leads to substance use
Concerned about appearances
Questioning and social norms divide people
Most nourishing when teens are heard
Hard to get low income teens to after school programs
We have local programs for different youth (Outright, Spectrum)
Help teens get Internet access
Programs are "safety nets" and wouldn't be there if we were doing a good job
Provide a comfortable place to hang out
Provide supplies for homework
Ask teens what they want for activities and hours at teen centers / programs
Teens without effective parents get pushed out earlier
We punish kids who push the rules
"Love kids more" instead of sending them off
Kids treated unfairly by police based on how they dress, race
"Queer" youth more often homeless & suicidal
Create programs to "level the playing field"

How can our community do better?

Put teens in positions of decision-making
Media should focus more on the positives of what teens are doing
Change perspective to look deeper at teens, i.e., zeal
Be open to what might help, be challenged
Schools should talk more openly about issues, i.e., sexuality
"Advisory" groups in school
Organize meetings where youth talk & adults can only listen, especially police and the business community (Church Street business owners)
Publicize youth events better and earlier
Use armory space for events
Use town meeting to dialogue with youth
Adults should make an effort to go to where teens are to dialogue, i.e., schools

RECOMMENDATIONS

What do you want legislators to know?

Support “youthbuild” with local / state funds

Fund local teen centers

Dept. of Education look @ outcomes of kids who are suspended and come up with alternatives

Dept. of Education be accountable for every school drop-out

Admit drop-out rate is a bigger problem and come up with alternatives

Give youth funds / power to run programs

Have a program / place to send kids when suspended

Transitional housing for youth

Change age to 21 for foster care limit

Provide college funds for foster kids

Fund research to examine effects of youth discrimination



VERMONT
PUBLIC
TELEVISION

Be more



PBS