

Creating effective youth participation in decision making: Student trustees

Our Significance. Our Contribution. You?

NZSTA Conference 2009

Student Decision Makers Network (Student Trustees) and MYD



THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT • TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO TAIOHI



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What this session will cover

- Introductions
- Defining Youth Participation and Effective Youth Participation
- Introduction to a Youth Participation Model – Harts Ladder
- The value of Student Voice
- Hearing from Student Voices

You may:

- Feel challenged
- Feel inspired
- Share your experiences
- Provide knowledge and positive models of how the Board involves a student trustee

Defining Youth Participation

“Youth participation is an **ongoing process** of young people’s **active involvement** in decision making in **matters that concern them.**”

Save the Children (2003)

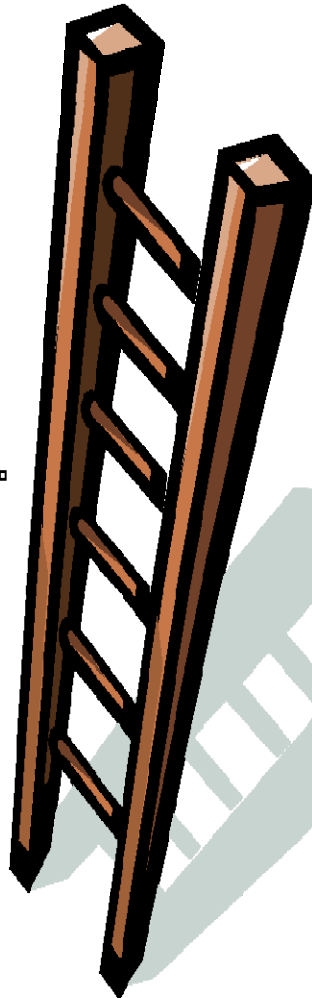


What is Effective Youth Participation?

“Letting young people **have a voice** and making sure that the opinions of everyone **are heard** and not just ignored, but **taken into account** when **decisions are made** about our future.”



Hart's Ladder (Roger Hart 1992)



Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults	Young people have the ideas, set up the project, and invite adults to join them in making decisions.
Youth-initiated and directed	Young people have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.
Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people	Adults have the initial idea but young people are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Their views are not only considered but they are also involved in making the decisions.
Consulted and informed	The project is designed and run by adults, but young people are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.
Assigned but informed	Adults decide on the project but young people volunteer for it. Young people understand the project and know who decided they should be involved and why. Adults respect their views.
Tokenism*	Young people are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.
Decoration*	Young people take part in an event, but they do not really understand the issues.
Manipulation*	Young people do or say what adults suggest they do, but have no real understanding of the issues, OR young people are asked what they think, adults use some of the ideas but do not tell them what influence they have on the final decision.

Do you listen to your Student Trustee on the Board?

- How do you take their opinion into consideration?
- Is your Student Trustee an active participant on the BoT Discussions?
- Is your Student Trustee treated as an equal, valued member of the BoT?
- Do you give your Student Trustee an opportunity to express their opinions?
- Do you place restrictions on your Student Trustee?
- Does your Student Trustee feel included in BoT meetings?

Challenges Student Trustees Face

Feeling...

- Restricted and unsupported
- Like just a legal requirement
- Opinions are under-valued
- Unconfident to speak to BoT
- A lack of support
- A lack of communication.
- Frustrated at lack of training

The Value of the Student Voice

- Student's opinions need to be taken into account when making a decision, “Who are schools meant to be **benefiting?** – **The students...** right??”
- How will the decision that is being made affect, and impact the Students? – The **voice and opinion** of the student is the **most informative** in deciding the Governance of the School.
- Schools are for **education**. The Boards job, at the end of the day is to make decisions which will help students achieve. If you don't listen to the student voice how can you be sure that the decisions made are in the student's best interest?

Student Trustee's experience the everyday reality of the school.

The Value of the Student Voice

- By taking into consideration the **Student Trustee's perspective** and therefore the Student Body's, the B.O.T can make more **informed decisions** and hopefully be more successful in the implementation of these.
- Students have a better **understanding** of the demographics of the school, they understand the people and not just the numbers.
- They deal with **all aspects of the school**, i.e. the student body, the senior management team AND the Board of Trustees.

Solutions for the Challenges Student Trustees Face

- We need more **support** = from Management teams , the Board and the school in general
- **Training** on the terminology of Board meetings, so that student trustees can be more involved in the discussion and decision making
- A **closer relationship** between the Student Trustee and the Principal = regular meetings perhaps
- Boards putting more effort into **listening** to the student perspective and taking it into account when making decisions
- Achieving better **communication** lines between the student trustee and the Board/ Senior Management Team/ the Student Body
- **Cutting down the restrictions** placed on the Student Trustee so that the Student Trustee can present a **true and honest representation** of Students beliefs and opinions.



Practical Steps to take:

- Ask for the Student Trustee's **opinion** on all matters
- **Meetings** with the Student Trustee and the Principal
- Actively **engage** with the Student Trustee
- Treat Student Trustees as **equals**
- Recognise that the Student Trustee was **elected** by the Student Body for a **reason**

Remember Student Trustees are in the minority at BoT meetings and functions. "It's not hard to engage, listen and consider the Student Trustee."

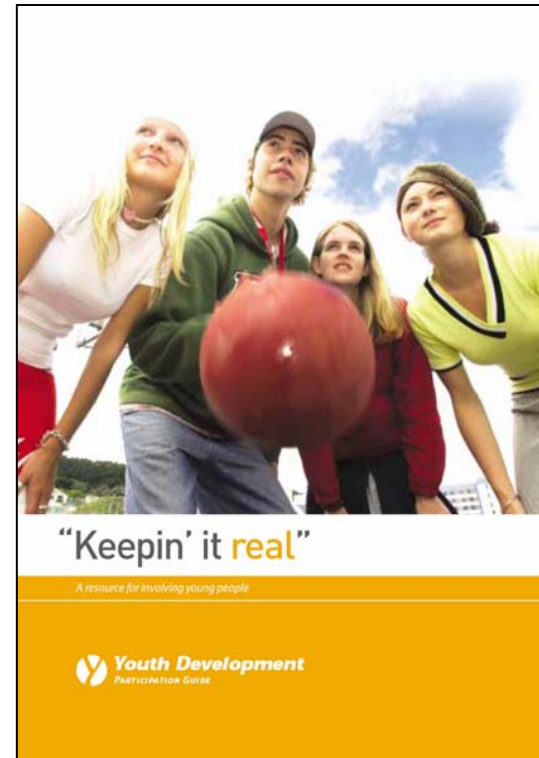
Keepin' It Real resource

Step 1: Get Organisational Commitment

- Adults are **committed**
- Adequate **resources** are provided
- Contributions are **valued**
- **Real issues** are covered
- Youth participation is a **process**
- Involvement from the **beginning to the end**

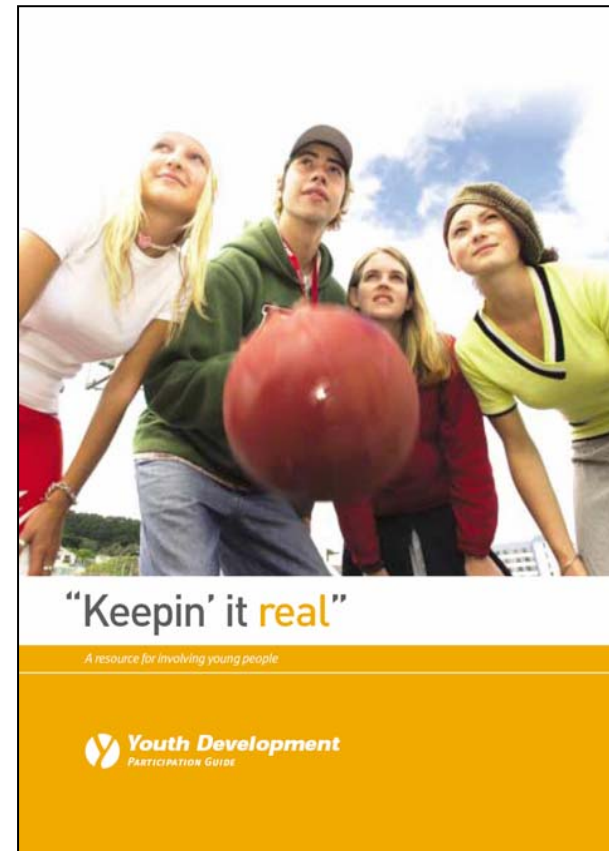
Step 2: Create Space for Involvement

- Values and **cultures** are acknowledged
- Young people's **diversity** is recognised
- Participation is by **choice**
- Participation is **challenging** and **fun**
- Participation is **beneficial** to young people



Step 3: Create a Youth-Friendly Environment

- **Relationships** are built
- Young people feel a **sense of belonging** and security
- Young people receive **good information**
- Young people get timely **feedback**



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The students are members of the Ministry of Youth Development's National Student Decision Makers Network. For more information please refer to the websites on the last slide.



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