

Engagement Ladder of Participation

"Engagement" can mean a number of different things. It occurs in any situation on a number of different levels. The International Association for Public Participation developed a useful scale for figuring out the level of engagement you're aiming for, called the Ladder of Participation. The ladder is as follows:

1. Informing and educating young people

This creates a connection between the issues and the youths lives, but doesn't ask for any input with meaningful decisions. It's not always a top down structure and includes things like peer-to-peer mentorship.

2. Gathering information from young people

Number two enables young people to share their opinions, but adults may still choose whether or not to act on any suggestion or use their insights.

3. Consulting with young people

Consultation implies a more shared exchange of ideas and greater value on youth's opinions.

4. Involving young people

The ideas and opinions of youth are deliberately sought and affect important decisions.

5. Establishing collaborative partnerships with young people

There is a full-on collaboration between adults and youth. Young people's ideas and opinions carry equal weight to that of the adults.

For any situation, the level you wish to reach may be different. There's also no strict distinction between them, and combing different levels may be a good option. Additionally, the International Association for Public Participation suggests that although the fifth rung is the ultimate goal for true and effective engagement, each step is important and necessary to get there.

Excerpt from: "United Nations World Youth Report." Youth and the United Nations. United Nations, 2010. Web. 24 Jan. 2011.