



America's Promise High School Dropout Prevention Summit

Youth Engagement Handbook

**Developed for the America's Promise Alliance Dropout Prevention Initiative
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Dear Summit Planning Team,

As you may know, in March 2006, a report produced for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation declared that high dropout rates are a “silent epidemic” afflicting our schools, our communities, and our country. Each year, almost one-third of public high school students—and nearly one half of all blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans—fail to graduate from public high school with their class. Some experts are predicting that the dropout problem will increase substantially over the next 15 years unless significant improvements are made.

In most states, the status of our high schools is poor enough that turning the tide cannot be accomplished through piecemeal, incremental approaches. Progress can only be made through “big tent” partnerships that understand how to address problems with our schools at individual, interpersonal, and systemic levels. Individual students need motivation and support to stay in school; relationships between students and adults within school buildings need to be strengthened, and schools need to become places that students see as safe, relevant, and the very best path to a healthy, productive future.

A key stakeholder to addressing the dropout crisis is young people themselves. No one knows this issue as closely or with the same perspective as the young people. No other member of our schools or of our community knows the daily experience of starting at home, going to school, spending the day in a classroom, spending after-school hours in the community and returning home every single day. The youth are our sole experts on what it is like to be a student.

For this reason, we are pleased to offer you this series of strategies and tools to help you engage student perspectives in the planning and execution of your dropout summit. The materials are organized in three sections: 1. Learn, 2. Listen, and 3. Lead. Each section provides descriptions and sample references and tools to engage the students in your community. The tools in each section can be utilized independently of each other but will offer the most depth of student perspective if used together.

We look forward to continuing to work together to help solve our nation’s “silent epidemic”.

Our Youth Engagement Framework

LEAD:

Youth engaged in planning, implementation, and follow-up

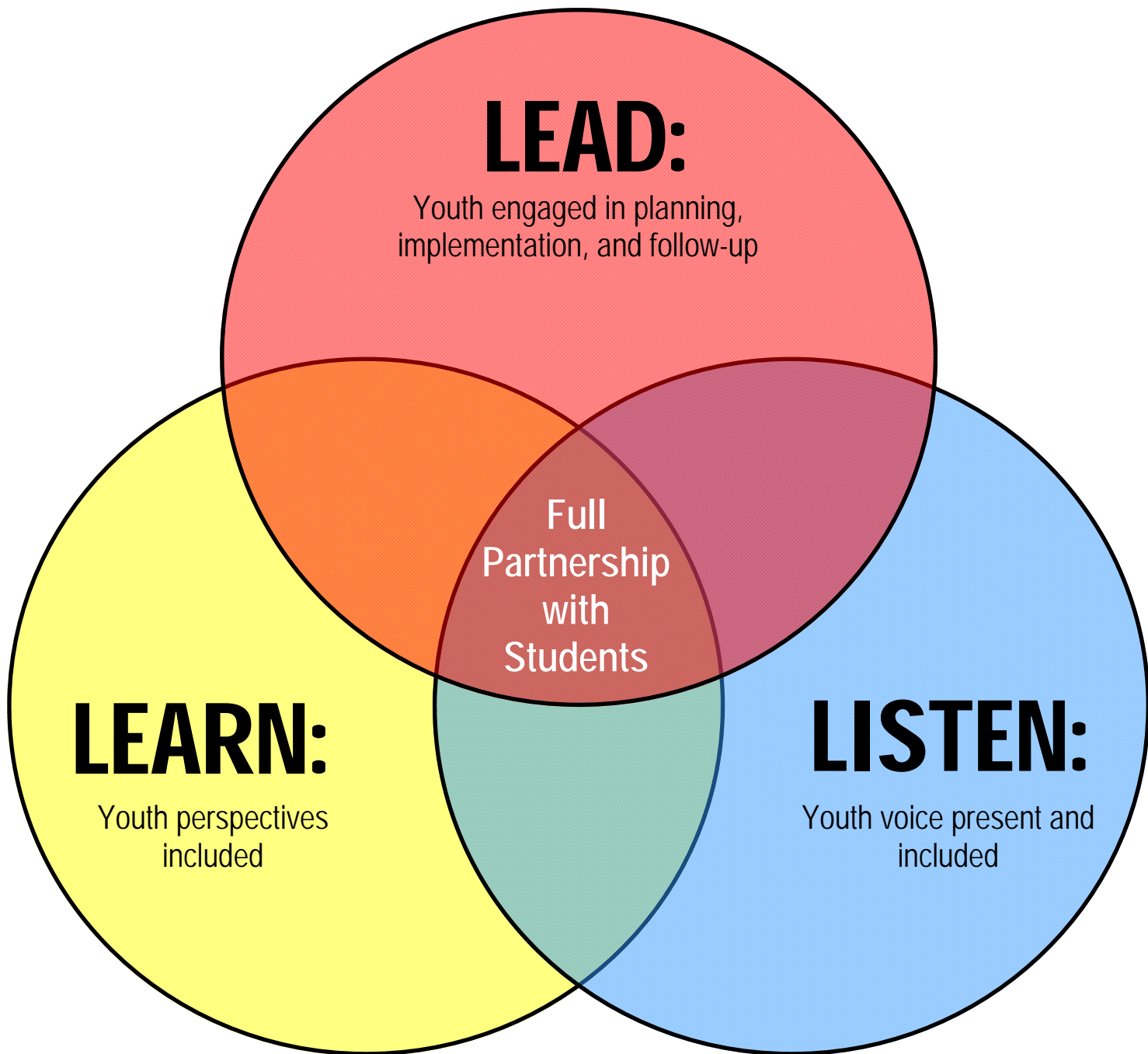
Full
Partnership
with
Students

LEARN:

Youth perspectives included

LISTEN:

Youth voice present and included



LEARN

Goal: to solicit the ideas and perspectives of students around the core issues related to the dropout crisis in their community so that their views will help inform and guide the broader conversation before, during, and after the summit.

Learn Strategy #1: The Youth Survey

Description: A student survey will allow you to gather student input around the causes and impacts of the dropout crisis in your community. This input is limited to the wording and breadth of the questions asked, but can be a quick and easy way to find out what students are thinking. Surveys could be done online through an engine like www.surveymonkey.com or done via paper survey and distributed through school and community-based networks. Results would need to be tallied and organized by the planning committee for the summit (or someone or group selected by the committee to do this on their behalf). Results would then be presented at the summit either through a broader general session format or through breakout sessions. Presentation of the work should message the importance of student voice in understanding the dropout crisis.

Pre-Summit Work

1. Create the survey that is right for your community
2. Connect with your partners/schools to develop an understanding of what the survey is and what it will be used for
3. Recruit partners who will help gather surveys with clear directions and a deadline for submission to the summit planning team (online surveys would just require a deadline)
4. Planning team or proxy analyzes the results of the survey. Online engines have the capacity to do this for you and can eliminate much work.
5. Planning committee develops its messaging and presentation for the summit and integrates it into the broader summit content.

Summit Event

1. Integrate survey findings into the summit through a formal presentation or through breakout session dialogue.
2. Be sure to message the importance of learning from our students.

Summit Follow-Up

1. Identify key gaps in your information from the summit and consider either following up with more student surveys or with focus groups (see Learn Strategy #2).
2. At the close of the summit, consider asking attendees what issue they would most like to hear student perspective on, and follow up by seeking that information to round out your knowledge of the dropout issue in your community.

Learn Strategy #2: Youth Focus Groups

Description: Student focus groups have the opportunity to help summit attendees learn at a deeper level about student perspectives on the dropout crisis. Focus groups could be done in addition to the Student Survey and are very helpful in further understanding the findings of the survey. If you are planning on doing focus groups instead of surveys, simply formulate your questions for the focus group that would address the core causes and/or impacts of the dropout issue. Efforts would have to be made to coordinate a minimum of 3-5 focus groups with diverse schools and community partners. Focus groups should be led by members of the summit planning team or a proxy facilitating the groups. Two members of the team would ideally facilitate for the practical reason of having a person to ask the questions and a person to take note. Additionally, the two would offer differing perspectives on what they hear in the groups and would therefore create more balanced reporting. Results would then be presented as part of the summit either through a broader general session format or through breakout sessions. Presentation of the work should message the importance of student voice in understanding the dropout crisis.

Pre-Summit Work

1. Create the focus group questions that are right for your community
2. Recruit partners who will help coordinate and organize groups of students to take part in these focus groups and set clear dates and times for the groups.
3. Planning team or proxy analyzes the results of the focus groups.
4. Planning committee develops its messaging and presentation of the focus group findings for the summit and integrates it into the broader summit content.

Summit Event

1. Integrate the student perspectives through a formal presentation or through breakout session dialogue.
2. Help message the importance of learning from our students.

Summit Follow-Up

1. Identify key gaps in your information from the summit and consider following up with more focus groups or surveys.
2. Consider at the close of the summit asking attendees what issue they would most like to hear the student perspective on, and follow up by seeking that information to round out your knowledge of the issue.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Sample Student Survey
2. Sample Focus Group Questions

LISTEN

Goal: To give everyone attending the summit the opportunity to hear directly from students about the causes and/or impacts underlying the dropout crisis in order to deepen their understanding of the issue by framing it in the personal experiences of current and former students.

Listen Strategy #1: The Youth Keynote

Description: The purpose of a student keynote speaker is to ground the summit in the lived experiences of current students and/or recent dropouts. The presence and story of even one student will serve as a reminder that students are at the core of this issue and will help ground the day with a real sense of purpose. The student selected to present the keynote should work with the summit planning team to ensure a deep understanding of the purpose of the day and to work together to ensure the student message is on point with the events of the day. For example, the student keynote should be aware of the content of other presenters so that he/she is not merely repeating their thoughts from a student perspective. The student keynote needs to be supported by clear expectations and communication from the planning team.

Pre-Summit Work

1. Identify a student through schools or community partners whose life and/or experiences would be relevant to the dropout crisis and one who would be willing to share his/her story/perspective on the issue.
2. Planning team representative(s) works with the student to establish expectations and brainstorm ideas for the development of the keynote address. Adults should help the student frame the message to the purpose of the day while also honoring the student's personal experiences and perspectives.
3. A member of the planning team, or another adult from a school or community group, supports the public speaking preparation and practice as needed for the student keynote.
4. Ensure plans for student transportation and excusing from school for the day of the summit.

Summit Event

1. Student keynote address delivered and framed as core to the day's conversations.

Summit Follow-up

1. See Learn strategies.

Listen Strategy #2: The Youth Panel

Description: The student panel should be made up of a diverse selection of current students and/or recent dropouts. The panel could be facilitated by an adult and/or another student. Regardless, the facilitator and panelists should allow time for 1-2 meetings prior to the day of the event to unpack their thoughts around the dropout issue and to become familiar with the format of the panel. Without this level of prep work, the panel could easily become disjointed and only cover initial responses to the questions rather than presenting attendees with a developed analysis. Further, there must be a degree of familiarity between the moderator and the panelists as well as some clear foreknowledge of the nature of the questions and the conversation. The panel should be allowed a minimum of 60 minutes including some time at the end for moderated questions and answers. The Q&A session should be carefully moderated with adult support to ensure that it is not combative and maintains respect for the student opinions even if members of the audience disagree. The panel should be wrapped up and the importance of student voice reinforced to the audience.

Pre-Summit Work

1. Identify a group of four to six students through schools or community partners whose life and/or experiences would be relevant to the dropout crisis and who would be willing to share their stories/perspectives on the issue.
2. Identify a youth and/or adult moderator.
3. Planning team representative and/or the panel moderator works with the students to establish expectations, brainstorm ideas, develop a deeper understanding of their experiences, and support their public speaking preparation. Adults should help the students frame their messages to the purpose of the day and the audience while also honoring the student's personal experiences and perspectives.
4. Ensure plans for student transportation and excusing from school for the day of the summit.

Summit Event

1. Student panel shared and framed as core to the day's conversations.

Summit Follow-up

1. See Learn strategies.
2. Additionally, the student panel could serve as the nexus for a Youth Advisory Board described in the Lead strategies section.

Listen Strategy #3: Youth Presence at the Summit

Description: Although having a significant student delegate presence at the summit will require quite a bit of communication and coordination, their presence will serve as a visible reminder that youth need to be kept at the center of the discussion. The planning team should work to recruit diverse student delegates and should be clear about the expectations of the day as one with students working together with adults. That being said, the planning team should seek not only students with such experience, but should also be prepared to support students who may have never had an opportunity to work as equals with adults. As part of this, the planning team should set the tone of the day as one where adult attendees support the student delegates and welcome their input. Communication and respect must work both ways for the day to be successful and safe for all to offer their insights. This strategy requires some significant understanding among students and adults related to the Tips for Shared Learning attachment. All student and adult participants should receive this handout prior to the event, or at a minimum, it should be acknowledged in the opening session for collective perusal.

Pre-Summit Work

1. Identify a group of students through schools or community partners whose life and/or experiences would be relevant to the dropout crisis and who would be willing to share their stories/perspectives on the issue in a setting of students and adults working together.
2. Planning team communicates to all summit attendees that students will be taking part in the summit because the committee deems their input critical to the success of the day and to the solutions to the dropout crisis.
3. Identify an adult chaperone from each school or community-based organization that is bringing students as the point person for the pre-planning and the day of the summit.
4. Develop a plan for reporting any instances of students or adults who are not communicating respectfully or who are making the space unsafe for sharing differing perspectives and ideas.
5. Ensure plans for student transportation and excusing from school for the day of the summit.

Summit Event

1. Set the tone in the opening session for the inclusion of the students and the collective respect of opinions and perspectives that will be offered during the day. This could be done by establishing the Norms of the day.
2. Note and provide an overview of the Tips for Shared Learning for all of the participants.
3. Ensure that at least two students, never just one, are at each discussion table, breakout conversation or other format used for discussion during the summit. In this way, every adult participant will have the opportunity to hear from students and each student will have the safety and support of being paired with another student in the process.

4. Planning team connects at the beginning of the day with the students and chaperones to ensure communications and to revisit the mechanism for reporting and dealing with any students or adults who are not respecting the perspectives of the other.
5. Acknowledge the students in the closing session for being there and offering their input as part of the solution to the dropout crisis.

Summit Follow-up

1. Either at the end of the day or as a follow-up, seek student participant reflections on their experience of the day and offer them the opportunity for added input if they felt they did not get the chance to share an idea.
2. See Learn strategies.
3. See Lead strategies.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Tips for Shared Learning
2. Sample Norms
3. Sample Questions for a Student Panel
4. Strategic Sharing

LEAD

Goal: to engage students as full partners with adults in planning and executing your dropout summit.

Lead Strategy #1: Summit Student Advisory Board

Description: A Summit Student Advisory Board (SSAB) should be composed of a representative cross section of your schools and community. A manageable board should be in the range of 12-15 students and could be recruited initially to help plan the adult summit and/or Full or Split-day Student Summits (described in Lead Strategy #2 and #3). The SSAB could coordinate any/all other strategies discussed in the Listen and/or Learn. The board would need to work in partnership with the adult planning team and be given significant responsibilities around planning and implementation (as opposed to merely being given tasks to do). Additionally, the SSAB should have a very visible presence on the day of the summit as leaders and facilitators of the day. In order to ensure a diversity of students and voice on the board, adult partners will have to work with the students on effective communication tools (not everyone has internet access, or even a phone for that matter) and transportation plans. There should be clear and focused adult leadership in support of the SSAB to ensure mutual accountability.

Pre-Summit Work

1. At least six weeks prior to the summit, identify a group of students through schools or community partners whose life and/or experiences would be relevant to the dropout crisis and who would be willing to partner with adults to address the issue. Students need to understand the level of time and work commitment involved in becoming a member of the SSAB. A community-based organization could also be recruited as an intermediary for this work.
2. Organize the group and provide some initial training for students and adults working together around youth/adult partnerships and about the shared focus of their work on the dropout issue. This work should deepen the students' and adults' understanding of the issue and therefore provide some direction in the planning of the summit.
3. If possible, SSAB members should receive a leadership or transportation stipend for their time and commitment.
4. Plan the summit in partnership with the SSAB and define shared roles for facilitation and coordination of all aspects of the summit event.

Summit Event

1. Co-facilitate the summit with the SSAB and ensure their presence in leading all full sessions and breakout sessions along with adults.
2. See Listen strategies.

Summit Follow-up

1. The SSAB could co-lead and organize post-summit efforts in the Learn strategies.
2. Each summit location should consider the ongoing roles that a Student Advisory Board could play in action planning around your community's dropout crisis and consider constituting it as a working advisory board even after the summit.

Lead Strategy #2: Split-day Youth Summit

Description: A Split-day Youth Summit is a half-day, student focused mini-summit that runs concurrently with a morning session of a full-day adult summit. The morning would consist of students discussing and analyzing the dropout issue from their perspectives and then organizing their ideas and sharing them in an afternoon session of the adult summit. The tone and content of the youth discussion and breakouts should mirror the tone and content of adult sessions. For example, if the adults are not making posters or creating slam poetry to convey their ideas then neither should the students. The SSAB described in Lead Strategy #1 should facilitate this mini-summit with support from adults. Together, they should develop talking points based on the morning discussions as well as lead the afternoon report-out during the adult summit.

Pre-Summit Work

1. See Lead Strategy #1.
2. See Learn and Listen strategies.
3. Develop informational and marketing materials that describe the purpose of the summit and the importance of getting student voice.
4. Disseminate marketing and registration materials through schools and community-based groups and utilize local leadership and leverage to ensure that students from all public schools are present.
5. Assess registration numbers and begin direct and targeted recruiting to fill school, racial, ethnic or other gaps in registered participants.
6. Plan the Split-day summit agenda and identify youth and adult facilitators for the agenda.

Summit Event

1. Co-facilitate with a Youth Advisory Board the Split-day summit with an emphasis on the same content and considerations that will be discussed in the adult summit.
2. Using a tool like the Wagon Wheel Facilitation Tool or other information gathering tools, collect the insights of youth participants.
3. Work with a team of youth and adults over a lunch break between summits to prepare the presentation/report out from the student summit to the adult summit.
4. Present student report out as core to the adult summit.

Summit Follow-up

1. Incorporate the recommendations from the student summit in ongoing planning and analysis.

Lead Strategy #3: Full-Day Youth Summit

Description: The Full-Day Youth Summit is a wholly separate summit that is ideally held prior to the adult summit. A Full-day Student Summit will allow students not only to offer the insights and preliminary analysis that happen during a split-day summit, but will also provide students enough additional time to develop specific recommendations for action. This level of youth engagement will provide valuable, specific information that will take the conversations at the adult summit to a deeper, more relevant level.

Pre-Summit Work

1. See Lead Strategy #1.
2. See Learn and Listen strategies.
3. Develop informational and marketing materials that describe the purpose of the summit and the importance of getting student voice.
4. Disseminate marketing and registration materials through schools and community-based groups and utilize local leadership and leverage to ensure that students from all public schools are present.
5. Assess registration numbers and begin direct and targeted recruiting to fill school, racial, ethnic or other gaps in registered participants.
6. Plan the Full-day Summit agenda and identify youth and adult facilitators for the agenda.

Summit Event

1. Facilitate (preferably with a Youth Advisory Board) the full-day summit with an emphasis on the same content and considerations that will be relevant to the adult summit.
2. Using a tool like the Wagon Wheel or other information gathering tools, collect the insights of youth participants.
3. Work with student participants to analyze the content from the morning sessions and organize them into concrete recommendations for addressing the dropout crisis.

Summit Follow-up

1. Incorporate the student recommendations in the adult summit planning and implementation especially considering the Listen and Lead strategies as part of the adult summit.
2. Incorporate the recommendations from the student summit in ongoing planning and analysis.
3. The Student Advisory Board could be developed for ongoing student leadership in planning efforts.
4. See Learn strategies.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Wagon Wheel Description
2. Proposed Wagon Wheel Questions

3. Sample Split-day Youth Summit Agenda
4. Sample Full-day Youth Summit Agenda

ATTACHMENTS: LEARN

SAMPLE YOUTH SURVEY

For each statement, please circle the response that best represents your experience at school.

1. I feel motivated to learn when I am at school.

disagree disagree somewhat no opinion agree somewhat agree

2. I feel safe at my school.

disagree disagree somewhat no opinion agree somewhat agree

3. My school is doing a good job preparing me for my future.

disagree disagree somewhat no opinion agree somewhat agree

4. My school holds high expectations for all students.

disagree disagree somewhat no opinion agree somewhat agree

5. My school grounds are clean and well-maintained.

disagree disagree somewhat no opinion agree somewhat agree

6. I feel like I belong at my school.

disagree disagree somewhat no opinion agree somewhat agree

7. There is an adult at my school who I can talk to if I am having personal problems.

disagree disagree somewhat no opinion agree somewhat agree

8. My teachers understand how to relate to students.

disagree disagree somewhat no opinion agree somewhat agree

9. My school respects the opinions of students even when we disagree.

disagree disagree somewhat no opinion agree somewhat agree

10. There are opportunities for students to voice their opinions on important school issues.

disagree disagree somewhat no opinion agree somewhat agree

SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Think of a time when you felt motivated to learn. Describe that experience and what about it motivated you.
2. Has there been an adult in your life who has positively supported your education?
If so, how did this person support your education? What did they do? Who were they (teacher, parent, coach etc.)?
If not, what support would you have wanted from an adult? How could they have showed you this support?
3. From a student perspective, what does a good school look like? What does it feel like?
4. In your opinion, why do students drop out of school?
5. What could your school do better to increase the graduation rate?
6. What could your community do better to support your educational goals?
7. What can you and/or other students do to increase the graduation rate?

ATTACHMENTS: LISTEN

Tips for Shared Learning Among Youth and Adults

Adult Do's	Adult Don'ts	Youth Do's	Youth Don'ts
<p>Come willing and ready to listen and learn</p> <p>Help keep the other adults in check</p> <p>Help ensure a safe environment for all to offer their input and ideas</p> <p>Articulate clearly the roles, responsibilities and expectations for all youth and adult participants</p> <p>Articulate from an adult perspective why youth voice is so important</p> <p>Ensure and articulate the importance of youth input and its impact after the event</p> <p>Prepare youth to be facilitators and co-facilitators and work to make sure a youth is the first to speak</p> <p>Lead with a question</p> <p>Have fun!</p>	<p>Assume that you know more or have more valuable knowledge than the youth</p> <p>Team up with or allow other adults to dominate the conversation</p> <p>Allow the outspoken or more experienced youth to dominate or rule the experience for all</p> <p>Assume that everyone understands why they are there and how they need to be together</p> <p>Create an atmosphere of tokenism</p> <p>Set up youth to feel engaged and important only to have them involved in a fruitless event or conversation</p> <p>Facilitate everything or be the first to speak</p> <p>Deliver answers</p> <p>Act like you would rather be or need to be somewhere else</p>	<p>Come willing and ready to contribute ideas, listen and learn</p> <p>Encourage all youth participants to contribute to the process and speak their truth</p> <p>Step Up and respectfully articulate when you feel an adult is dominating a conversation</p> <p>Bring honesty, energy and your unique ideas and experiences to the conversation</p> <p>Respect people with different backgrounds and experiences</p> <p>Follow up by taking your ideas and information back to your own school and community</p> <p>Have fun!</p>	<p>Assume adults won't take you seriously or aren't really interested in hearing the truth from your perspective</p> <p>Team up with people you know or who share ideas in an attempt to "win" a conversation</p> <p>Defer leadership and/or expertise to adults</p> <p>Show up just because someone told you to or because you got out of school</p> <p>Assume that everyone has had your same experiences</p> <p>Leave this as a one-time experience and go back to your school and community without working to change anything</p> <p>Complain about being bored without helping to make things fun</p>

SAMPLE SUMMIT NORMS

The purpose of Norms: We want to establish the basic values of how we want to be together and work with each other as part of the summit. We also want to help each other stay accountable to these values to make sure that the summit experience is safe and supportive for all who are involved. Further, we want to ensure input from all participants, not just those who are most vocal or the most experienced leaders.

What to do with Norms: Norms should be introduced at the beginning of the summit and participants should be asked to agree to these for the purpose of a successful summit. Norms should stay posted all day and should also be posted in any breakout rooms or sessions. We want them to be present and a constant reminder.

Speak Your Truth

This norm is about knowing that your experience, your ideas, your input matters and you need to speak it. Additionally, this norm is to acknowledge that this is YOUR truth and not necessarily THE truth, or even representative of others who may have had very different experiences.

Listen for Understanding

This norm builds on the previous one to emphasize the need for all of us to listen for the purpose of understanding the experiences and perspectives of others, not for the purpose of responding to them, or even creating our own argument against them. We want the day to be about understanding a variety of experiences not just the ones of the loudest or most articulate people.

Respect Each Other

Again, building on the previous, the summit has to be about respecting differences and respecting the perspectives as well as needs of each other.

Be Present

If the summit is going to be a success, every participant must be present in mind, body and spirit. If we are going through the motions or thinking about being somewhere else, we are undermining the purpose of the day.

Step Up/Step Back

We all need to know when it is time to step up and when it is time to step back. This is about self-monitoring. If you have been talking frequently and others have not, it is time to step back. If you have not been talking, then it may be time to step up. Be aware of yourself and your involvement for the greater purpose of the summit.

Take Care of Your Needs

Do what you need to do in terms of your health, emotional or biological needs as necessary for you to maintain the rest of the norms. Restroom breaks, a drink of water, standing and stretching are all a part of taking care of your needs and should be done in a way that supports the rest of the norms rather than disrupts them.

Give Gentle Reminders

We are all working together for this summit. If we see another person who is not living up to the norms, it is our duty to offer them a gentle reminder. This means doing so privately, or quietly and in a respectful tone so as not to embarrass or put someone on the defensive.

SAMPLE YOUTH PANEL QUESTIONS

1. Think of a time when you felt motivated to learn. Describe that experience and what about it motivated you.
2. Has there been an adult in your life who has positively supported your education?
If so, how did this person support your education? What did they do? Who were they (teacher, parent, coach etc.)?
If not, what support would you have wanted from an adult? How could they have showed you this support?
3. From a student perspective, what does a good school look like? What does it feel like?
4. In your opinion, why do students drop out of school?
5. What could your school do better to increase the graduation rate?
6. What could your community do better to support your educational goals?
7. What can you and/or other students do to increase the graduation rate?

Strategic Sharing

Sharing in a strategic way means making good choices about how we tell our life stories so that our voices can be heard, we are effective, and our wellbeing is protected. At its best, sharing from personal experience can educate, inspire, and make a real difference. Stories are memorable and compelling; they put a human face on issues, needs, and triumphs. Stories motivate and inspire us to action. Disclosing personal information, however, also carries some risks. Sharing personal experiences can make us vulnerable and may make our listeners uncomfortable. At its worst, sharing our life stories can feel manipulative or exploitative and lead to harmful consequences. This worksheet will help you think through your personal story and consider the ways you want to share, what you want to share, and perhaps most importantly, what you are not comfortable sharing.

Three Steps to Strategic Sharing

STEP 1: CHOOSE

Choose what you will share and what you will keep private. Ask yourself:

- What is my purpose in sharing this information?
- Who benefits from this sharing?
- What do I want my audience to learn?

STEP 2: CONNECT

- Learn as much as you can about your audience and prepare a way to connect with them as you share. This shows respect for the audience and will guide you in making choices about what parts of your life story to share.
- Learn as much as you can about the issue you are speaking about so that you can talk about it outside of your personal story. This allows the space to draw the line as to what personal information you are sharing while remaining a contributor to the conversation and connected to the audience. Example: "I'm not comfortable answering that question about my own life, but what I can tell you is that x% of youth face that issue."

STEP 3: CLAIM

Claim your own story and your choices. Be explicit in describing:

- The reasons you have chosen to share.
- The emotions that come up for you as you share.
- The meaning and significance your experience has for you.

ATTACHMENTS: LEAD

Wagon Wheels Brainstorm

Facilitation Notes

Developed in the field by educators affiliated with National School Reform Faculty.

www.nsrffharmony.org

Purposes

- To stimulate lots of generative thinking in a very short time.
- To stimulate powerful thinking between people who might not know each other.
- To create a “vivid image bank” of a new idea in action to inform the planning process.
- To develop a sense of team with a common purpose.

Set up

- Four chairs back to back at the hub of the wheel and four chairs on the outer circle facing the chairs at the hub.
- Facilitator selects 4 ideas to explore.

Directions

Have participants bring paper and pen and fill in the seats in the wheel(s).

Ask them to take notes of both their own ideas as well as their partner's.

The people on the outside of the wheel will be moving one seat to the right at each rotation; people at the hub remain in their seats.

Explain that they will be working on one topic with each partner for approximately 5 minutes — i.e. they will work with 4 different partners during the activity.

For each topic have the participants reach a common understanding of what the topic means and then brainstorm what it would look like in action.

At the end of each rotation, ask each participant sitting on the outside of the wheel to rotate one seat to the right. After they settle down, give them the next topic and ask them to reach a common understanding before brainstorming.

Going Deeper

Have participants pick their favorite ideas for each topic and write them down on post-its. Make sure they label the top of each post-it.

Put large flip chart sheets with the topic title on the top around the room and have participants post their favorite ideas on the appropriate sheet.

Create focus groups to further explore a specific topic and to plan how to put the powerful ideas into action.

SAMPLE WAGON WHEEL QUESTIONS (4 Ideas to Explore)

1. **Student Motivation:** Think of a time when you were motivated to learn. What was it about this experience that motivated you?

2. **Dropout Rates:** In your opinion, what are the main root causes why so many students are dropping out of school?

3. **School Improvement:** What can your school do to improve the graduation rate?

4. **Student Engagement:** What role can students play in improving the graduation rate?

SAMPLE SPLIT-DAY YOUTH SUMMIT AGENDA

Registration and Light Breakfast: 8-8:45

Total Summit Time: (8:45 - 11:30) 2h 45min

I. Introductions and Icebreaker (20 min)

This should be given a reasonable amount of time as a means of the youth to open up and start to feel comfortable to speak openly for the rest of the time (this feeling of purpose and connection and openness will make or break the process).

II. Setting the tone, defining the purpose and making the challenge (10 min)

The day should be framed by a youth speaker who talks about the importance of the day and the need for student input and working together with adults.

III. Setting the Norms (10 min)

See Sample Norms

IV. Presentation of the facts (15 min)

A brief reporting on the data related to dropouts or other relevant local data. This must be brief and clearly framed in the context of the previous section's challenge. The data will be important grounding for the dialogue of the day.

BREAK and Transition to Breakout Sessions (15 min)

V. Breakout Sessions: Information Gathering and Discussion (75 minutes)

Breakout sessions should be focused on gathering student input around identifying and addressing the core issues related to the dropout summit. See the Wagon Wheel attachment as an effective strategy for gathering this information. Multiple breakout session topics can be offered with students attending two different topics. This could still be accomplished in the sample time frame or you could extend the breakout session time allotment.

VI. Report Out with All Attendees (20 min)

2 students, possibly student facilitators or Student Advisory Board members, summarize the ideas from the breakout session and present 2-3 key findings to the summit participants.

VII. Closing Remarks (5 min)

One student wraps up the day, thanks everyone for participating and offers some insight into the next steps for the work.

At the end of the Split-day Student Summit, which runs concurrently with an adult summit, the students who share in the Report Out should prepare for their role in sharing the results of the student summit in the afternoon of the adult summit. This is most effective if these students present as a panel that is moderated by an adult who can help frame the morning with them.

SAMPLE FULL-DAY YOUTH SUMMIT AGENDA

Registration and Light Breakfast: 8-8:45

Total Summit Time: (8:45 – 2:15)

- VIII. **Introductions and Icebreaker** (20 min)
This should be given a reasonable amount of time as a means of the youth to open up and start to feel comfortable to speak openly for the rest of the time (this feeling of purpose and connection and openness will make or break the process).
- IX. **Setting the tone, defining the purpose and making the challenge** (10 min)
The day should be framed by a youth speaker who talks about the importance of the day and the need for student input and working together with adults.
- X. **Setting the Norms** (15 min)
See Sample Norms
- XI. **Presentation of the facts** (15 min)
A brief reporting on the data related to dropouts or other relevant local data. This must be brief and clearly framed in the context of the previous section's challenge. The data will be important grounding for the dialogue of the day.

BREAK and Transition to Breakout Sessions (15 min)

- XII. **Breakout Session I: Information Gathering and Discussion** (60 minutes)
Breakout sessions should be focused on gathering student input around identifying and addressing the core issues related to the dropout summit. See the Wagon Wheel attachment as an effective strategy for gathering this information.

LUNCH (45 Min) 11:00

- XIII. **Breakout Session II: Information Gathering and Discussion** (60 minutes)
- XIV. **Response Mapping and Action Steps:** (45 min)
Students should return after lunch to their last breakout session room and begin to work to identify 4-5 themes or key areas of focus from the morning session under which the many specific responses would all fall.
- XV. **Report Out with All Attendees** (20 min)
2 students, possibly student facilitators or Student Advisory Board members present 2-3 key recommendations to the summit participants.
- XVI. **Closing Remarks** (10 min)
One student wraps up the day, thanks everyone for participating and offers some insight into the next steps for the work.