

Hampton's Model of Youth Civic Engagement



Three key pathways create a system that increases a community's social capital. This approach — investing in youth — offers countless benefits. It taps their energy and ideas, creates a youth focus in public decision-making, ensures more inclusive results, trains them for increasingly responsible and meaningful positions, creates productive citizens and cultivates pro-social attitudes in the next generation of taxpayers and policy-makers. Most important, it builds a better community.

For more information, contact:

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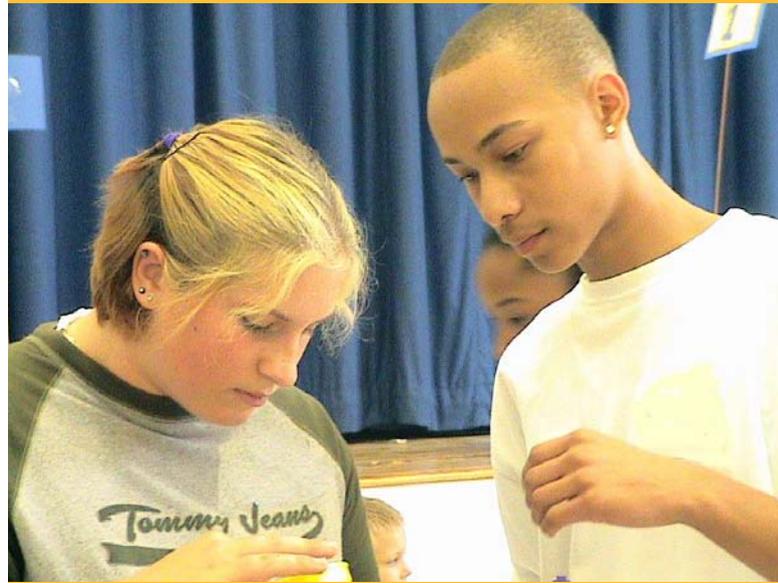
To obtain additional pamphlets in this series covering more specific topics of Youth Civic Engagement and Creating a Youth-Friendly City, email foryouth@hampton.gov.



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Youth as Change Agents in Schools



Photography by Lisa M. Zunzanyika
Additional photos courtesy of Alternatives, Inc. and City of Hampton

YOUNG VOICES, NEW VISIONS:
The Power of Youth to Improve Communities

A series based on Hampton, Virginia's model of Youth Civic Engagement

Youth as Change Agents in Schools

Young people possess a unique perspective on what makes schools great places to learn. Schools have a unique opportunity to help students hone their citizenship and leadership skills by providing meaningful opportunities to serve, advise and share leadership.

HAMPTON OPPORTUNITIES

- The Superintendent's Student Advisory Group helps craft policies on issues such as attendance, calendar, requirements for extra-curricular activities, and long-range investments.
- Secondary principals meet regularly with their own advisory groups to gather input before decisions are made, especially about school climate.
- Some principals tap student advisors to assist with selection of new faculty.
- Trained teens teach younger students about responsible relationships and assist their transition to high school.
- A student-generated definition of a nurturing school environment serves as the basis for student/faculty guidelines.
- Youth experience service learning in the eighth grade civics curriculum.
- Afterschool programs emphasize service and leadership from a young age with older students mentoring younger ones.



KEYS TO SUCCESS

Attitudes

School culture must expand to allow students to be viewed as resources in creating a better school.

Training

Students need to learn how to solicit input from peers, conduct research, evaluate issues, and advocate for ideas, as well as acquire critical thinking, negotiation and presentation skills.

Listening

Adults must approach this partnership with a willingness to hear youth perceptions and ideas, and value their insights.

Youth on boards?

While a worthwhile goal, without the necessary training or support, student representation on School Boards can become token, antagonistic, or merely a positive experience for one young person. It's best to start with the three keys above and create a successful student engagement system before considering board membership.

