



# **“Nothing About Us Without Us”: Engaging Youth in Their Own Healthy Sexual Futures**

**Monica Rodriguez/Kurt Conklin – SIECUS – for  
Office of Adolescent Health and  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families**

**July 26, 2011**

**Getting Started**

# Welcome and Introductions

## About Today's Presenters

- Monica Rodriguez, MS

President and CEO, SIECUS

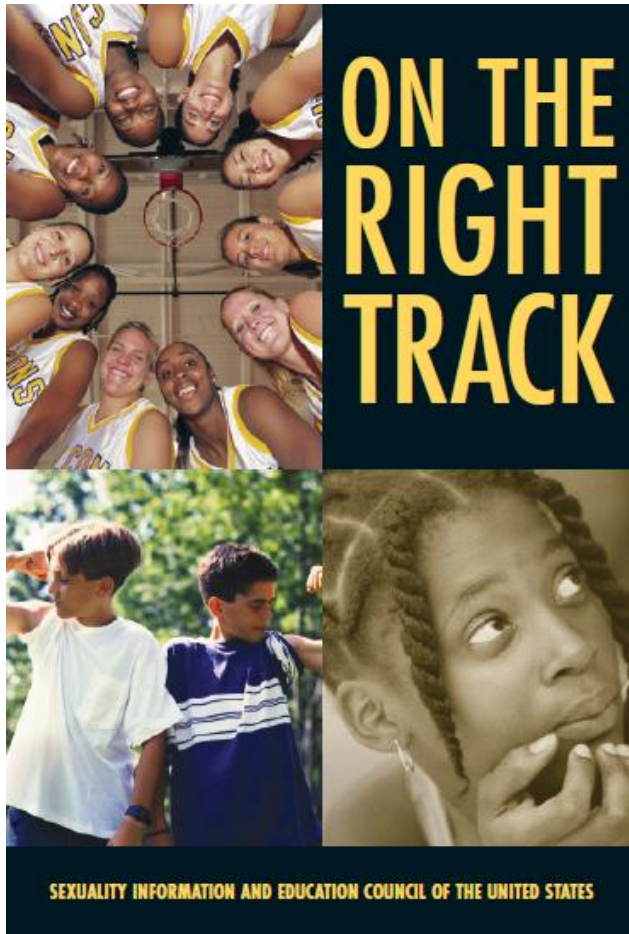


- Kurt Conklin, MPH, MCHES

Project Coordinator, SIECUS



## About SIECUS



- Private, nonprofit NGO
- Established 1964
- Offices in NYC and DC
- Mission:
  - **Educate** by assisting schools/CBOs
  - **Advocate** by supporting sound policy
  - **Inform** with educational resources

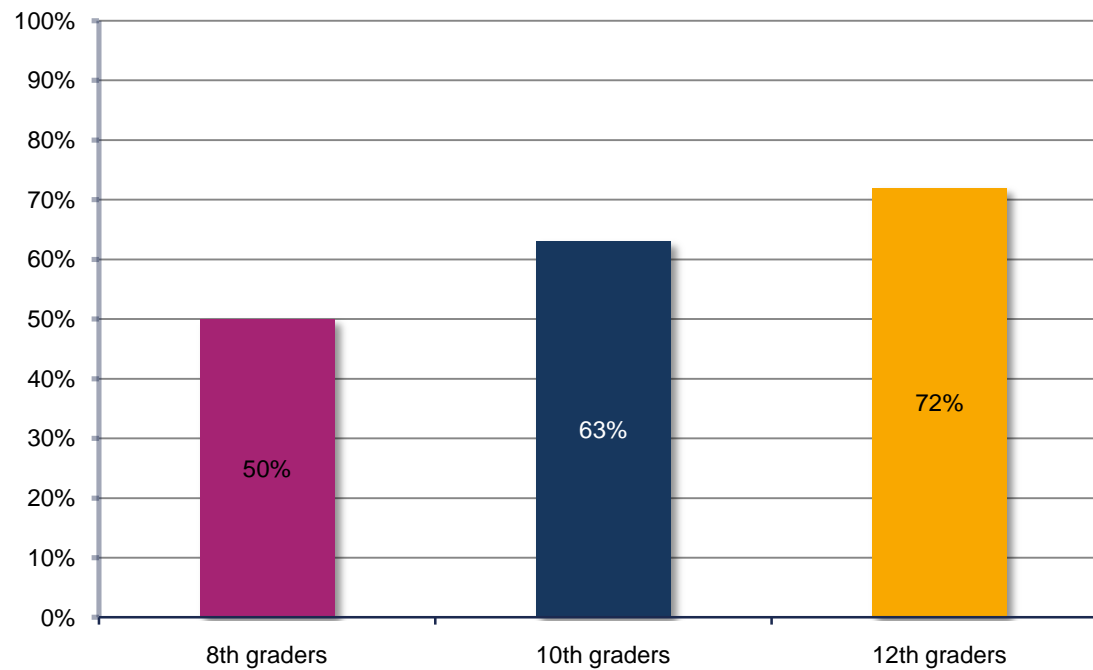
Pictured: SIECUS' report, *On the Right Track*

[http://www.siecus.org/\\_data/global/images/OnTheRightTrack.pdf](http://www.siecus.org/_data/global/images/OnTheRightTrack.pdf)

## About You

- Who is participating today?
  
- Please respond to our poll with the best choice that describes your PRIMARY professional role at your agency:
  - Teen peer educator
  - Community educator
  - Counselor
  - Clinician
  - Administrator
  - Other

## About You: Poll Results



## Today's Objectives

By the conclusion of this webinar, participants will be able to:

- Describe an example of a successful youth engagement initiative in public health
- Identify at least three strategies to engage adolescents in programming

# Today's Agenda

- What Is “Youth Engagement”?
- Youth Engagement in Action
- The Elements
- Implications for Your Interventions
- Insights from the Field
- Resources
- Q & A
- Wrap-up



## Defining Terms

# What Is “Youth Engagement”?

## Today's Quote: “Nothing About Us Without Us”

- Is said to originate in disability advocacy
- Applies to any community targeted for public health interventions
- Has special resonance for youth
- Your stakeholders **INCLUDE** your adolescent learners!

## “Youth Engagement” Defined



- Keeping youth actively involved (not merely “present”) in your intervention by...
  - Establishing a youth-friendly environment
  - Building their sense of belonging
  - Nurturing their sense of self-efficacy

## Research on Youth Engagement: Rich and Growing!

*Centers for Disease  
Control and  
Prevention (2009)*

*School  
Connectedness:  
Strategies for  
Increasing Protective  
Factors Among Youth*

*Atlanta, GA: U.S.  
Department of Health  
and Human Services*

- Enhancing multiple protective factors for youth can improve adolescent health even more than merely addressing specific health risks such as early sexual initiation.
- Protective factors include adolescents' belief that the adults in their schools, clinics and community centers care about them as individuals.

## Research on Youth Engagement: Rich and Growing!

- “You see Ms. Hightower standing out here now.... I’ve never seen a dean or a principal or nothing really come out of the school and watch these kids. When a kid feels loved, they know that, and they know when they come to school they are safe.”

– *Enix Daniels, former student at Chicago’s Mary McLeod Bethune School of Excellence*

*Education Week  
(2011)*

*“Study Links School  
Safety to  
Achievement,  
Relationships”*

*Edweek.org. online  
edition, May 10, 2011*

# Research on Youth Engagement: Rich and Growing!

*M. A. Gambone,  
A. M. Klem, &  
J. P. Connell (2002)*

*Finding Out What  
Matters for Youth:  
Testing Key Links in  
a Community Action  
Framework for Youth  
Development*

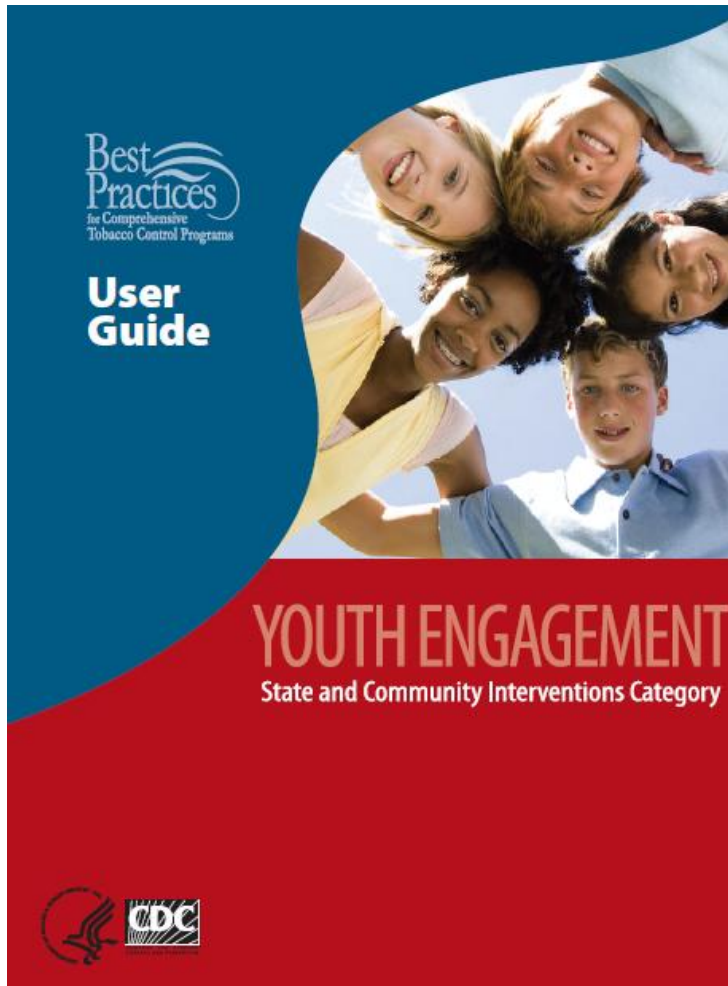
*Philadelphia, PA:  
Philadelphia Youth  
Development  
Strategies, Inc., and  
Institute for Research  
and Reform in  
Education*

- Engagement in learning in all its aspects is related to productive adulthood.

**Case Study**

# Youth Engagement in Action

## Lessons from the Tobacco Control Field



- One of a series of user guides for building effective and sustainable tobacco control programs
- How programs benefit from involving youth in advancing tobacco control policy
- Evidence-based



## Lessons from the Tobacco Control Field

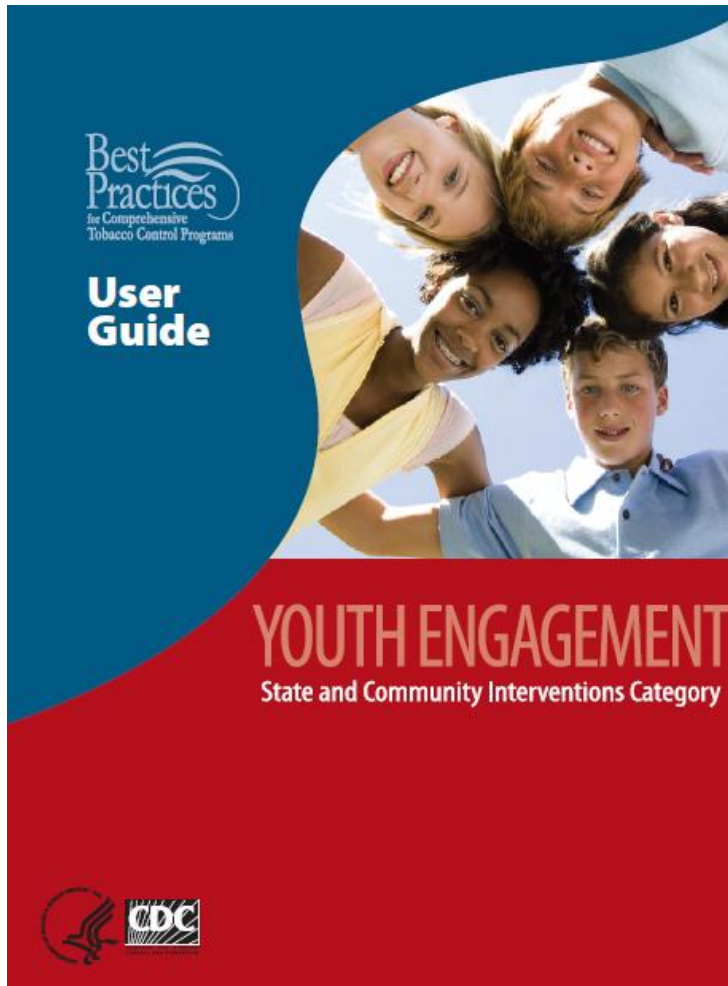
- Why engage youth?
  - Energy and vitality
  - Creativity and innovation
  - Capacity to mobilize peers
  - Generational insight

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010)*

*Best Practices User Guide: Youth Engagement—State and Community Interventions*

*Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health*

## Lessons from the Tobacco Control Field



- Provide youth with opportunities to understand the policies that shape their environment
- Establish complementary youth and adult roles
- Create leadership opportunities for youth that advance your program or agency

## Successful Youth Engagement

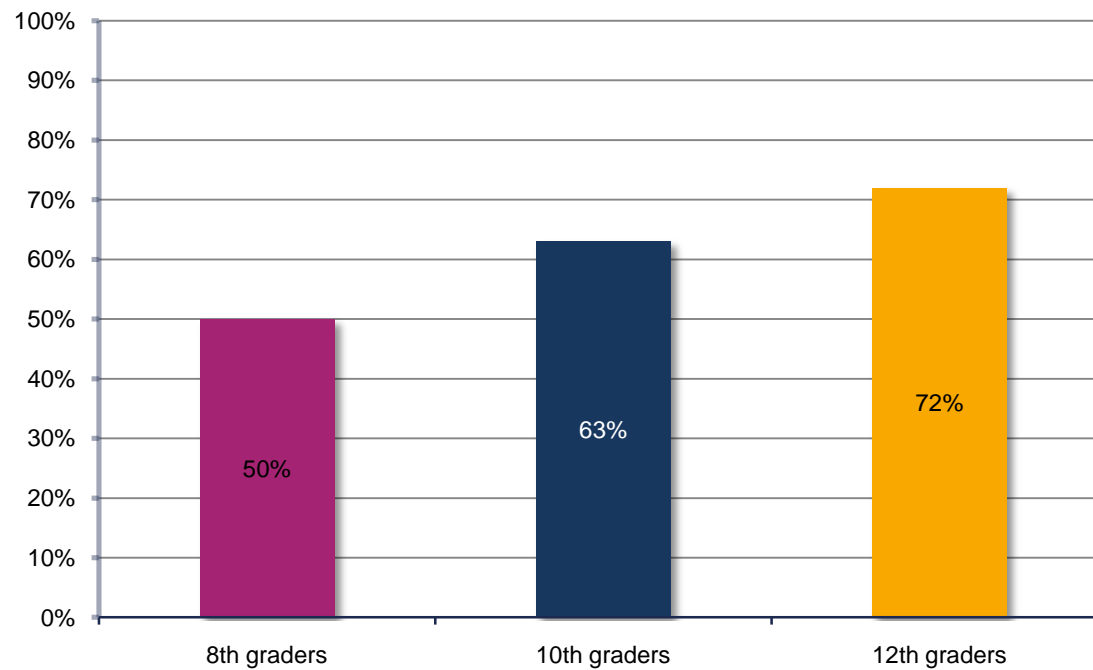
# The Elements

# 1. Establishing a Youth-friendly Environment



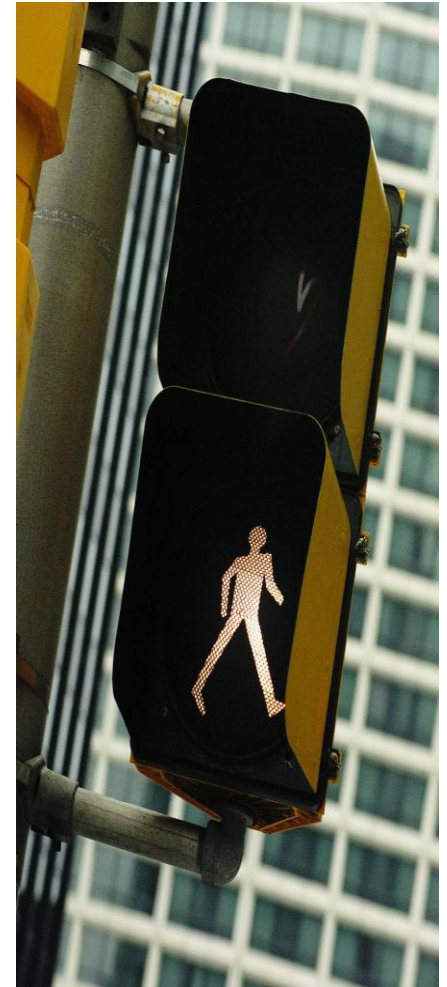
- Communicating through “channels” that youth typically use
- Scheduling, transit and incentives which meet youth expectations
- Inviting youth to speak first in adult meetings

# Youth-Friendly Environments: Poll Results

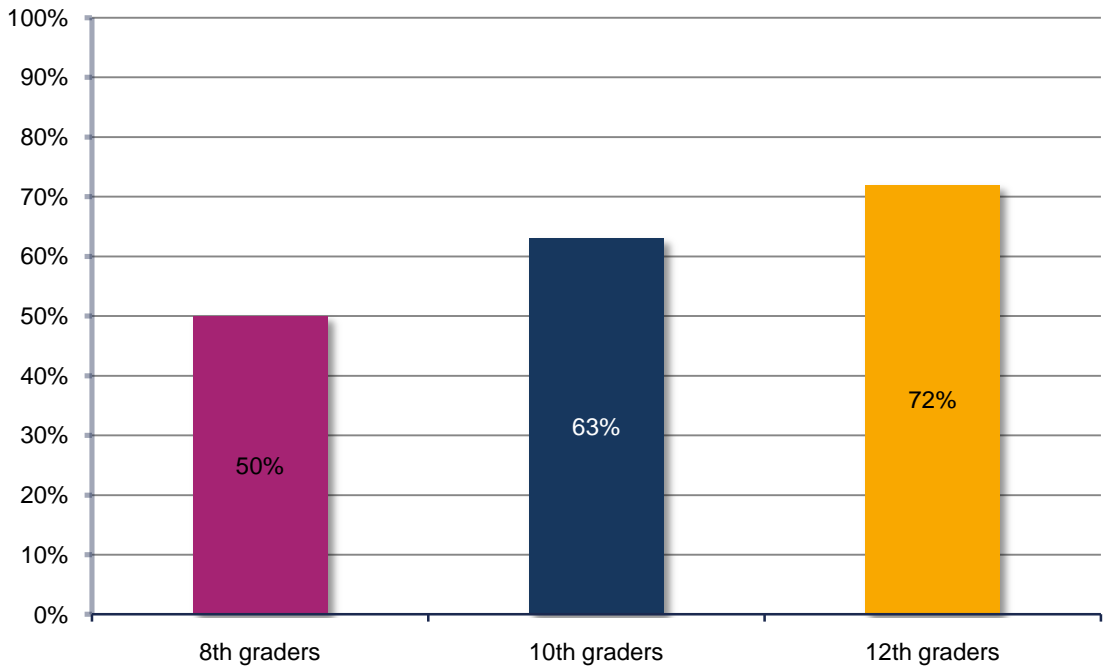


## 2. Building a sense of belonging

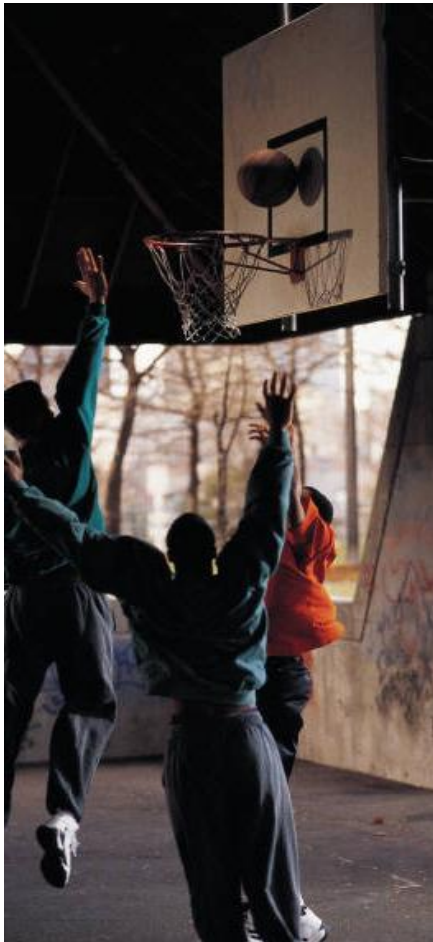
- Designating places and spaces at the intervention site where youth names are visible
- Assigning responsibilities to youth that will enhance the program environment and link youth to their community
- Clearly communicating expectations both verbally AND in writing—for the individual AND the group



# Sense of Belonging: Poll Results



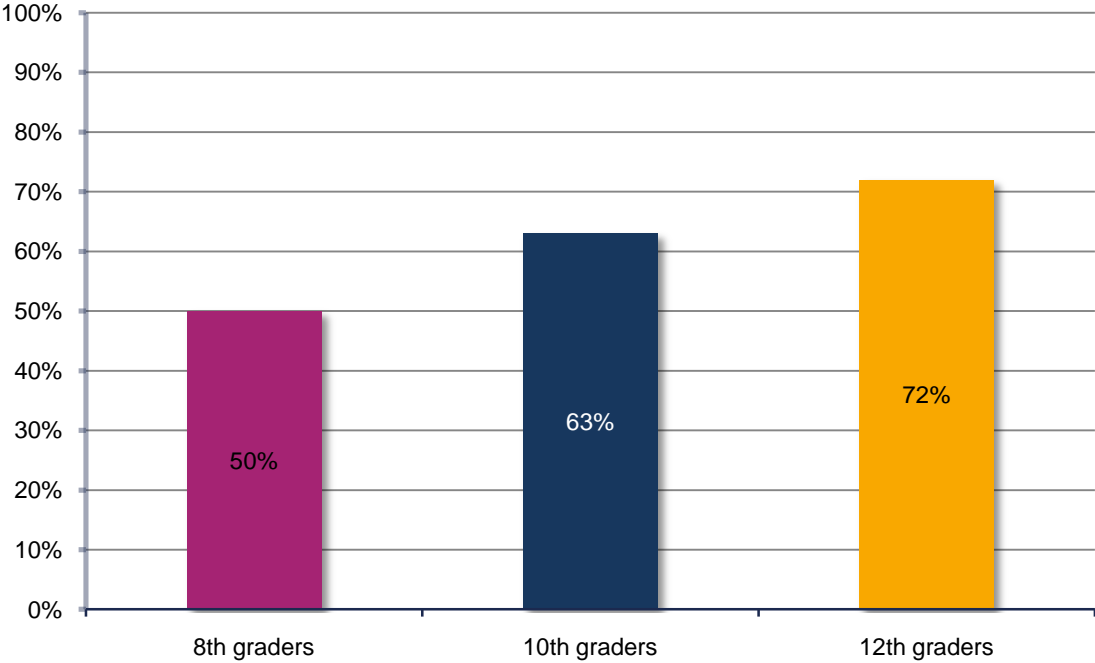
### 3. Nurturing a Sense of Self-efficacy



- Gradually increase youth tasks and responsibilities over time, and provide assistance when necessary
- Make time for reflection sessions in which youth can analyze what is going well and what could be improved (and how)
- Celebrate successes
  - At the intervention level
  - At the level of engagement with you and your agency



# Self-efficacy: Poll Results



**Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Teen Parenting Programs**  
**Implications for Your Interventions**

# Assessing Your Agency or Intervention for Youth Engagement Opportunities



- Reviewing your agency protocols on how to involve and retain youth
- Polling your co-workers to see what strategies they use to keep youth engaged
- Interviewing or surveying youth who participate in your programs

## Will It Compromise Fidelity?

- What are your intervention's "core elements"?
- What are the strategies you use (or plan to use) to engage youth and sustain their involvement?
- Do any of your strategies compromise the core elements of the intervention?
  - If no, proceed as planned.
  - If yes, change the strategy!



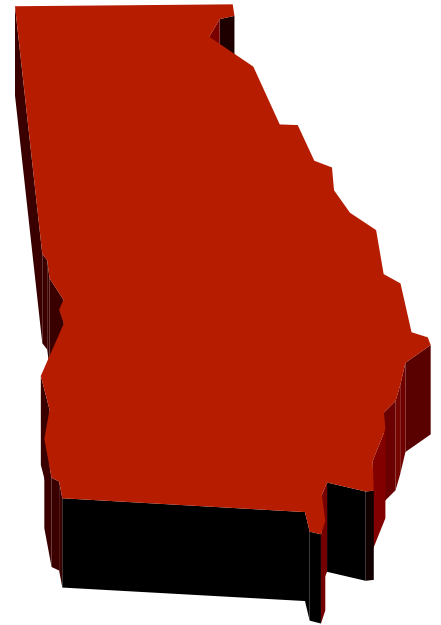
Real World Experiences

# Insights from the Field

# Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (G-CAPP)

## Kim Nolte – Vice President, Programs and Training

- “Provide transportation to and from the program and incentives while they are there.”
- “We had a van pick up the young people from their school; we fed them snacks, held the program, and then drove them back to their homes.”



# The Washington Hospital (Washington, PA)

## Mary Jo Podgurski, RNC, EdD – Director, Teen Outreach



- “A strength of our program is peer education. We’ve trained young people to serve as educational mentors to other teens since 1995. I always say that a message from an adult is a whisper; when that same message is given by a young person it is a shout! Our teens also perform educational dramas as the Real Talk Performers.”

# District of Columbia Public Schools, Office of Youth Engagement

## Andrea DeSantis – Coordinator, Risk Reduction

- “Start by asking youth what their personal goals are, even for the short run. Then show them how your program advances those goals. We led a PhotoVoice project for middle school students, and we sustained their active interest by tying the project to their class art portfolios or their applications to DC’s public arts high school. How did we figure out this connection? We asked them!”





Where to Turn for Support

# Resources

## Research on Youth Engagement: Rich and Growing

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009). School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/adolescenthealth/pdf/connectedness.pdf>
- Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (2009). What Is Youth Engagement? Toronto, Canada. [http://www.engagementcentre.ca/order/index\\_e.htm](http://www.engagementcentre.ca/order/index_e.htm)
- Scheve, J. A. et al. (2006). Say Y.E.S. to Youth: Youth Engagement Strategies. Pennsylvania State University. <http://cyfar.cas.psu.edu/PDFs/yesbookweb.pdf>
- Yonezawa, S., Jones, M., & Joselowksy, F. (2009). Youth Engagement in High Schools: Developing a Multidimensional, Critical Approach to Improving Engagement for All Students. Academy for Educational Development and UCSD-CREATE. [http://www.aed.org/Publications/upload/YEHS\\_FINAL-TO-PRINT.pdf](http://www.aed.org/Publications/upload/YEHS_FINAL-TO-PRINT.pdf)

Q & A

Questions? Comments?

Wrap-up

# Putting It All together

## “Nothing About Us Without Us”

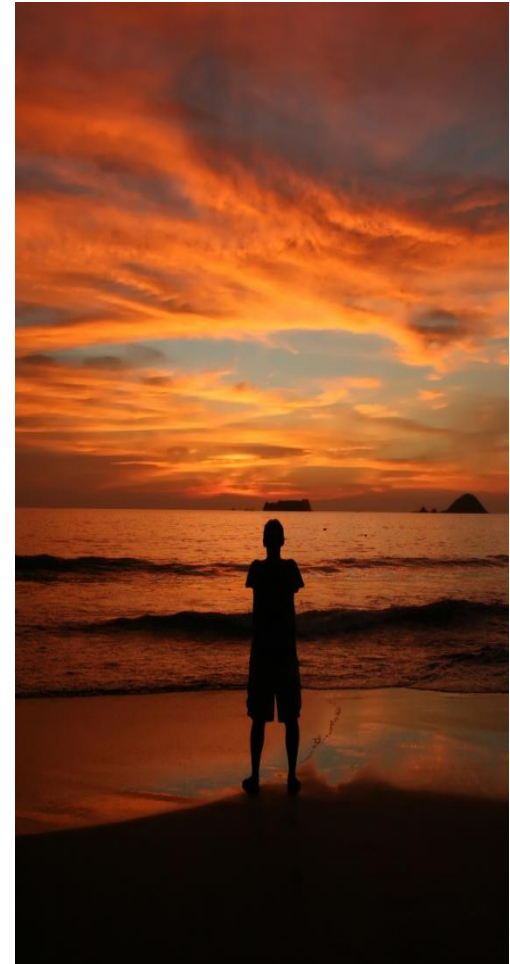


- Keep youth actively involved (not merely ‘present’) in your intervention by...
  - Establishing a youth-friendly environment
  - Building their sense of belonging
  - Nurturing their sense of self-efficacy

# Opportunity

*“Adolescence represents a real opportunity to make a difference in life-long patterns, at a key developmental state when choices and behavior patterns are being determined.”*

– World Health Organization



# Thank You!

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