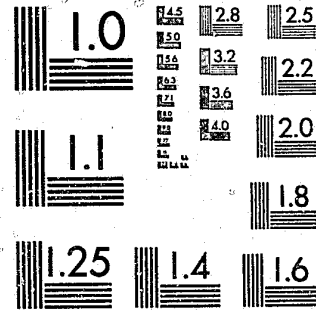


National Criminal Justice Reference Service



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National Institute of Justice
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D. C. 20531

8/6/84

ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

of New York, Inc.
24-16 Bridge Plaza South
Long Island City, N.Y. 11101
(212) 729-8866

Miriam Thompson
Executive Director

CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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KATHLEEN JARVIS, Project Coordinator
Summer 1983

93252

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NCJRS
MAR 5 1984
ACQUISITIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

The YES CHANGE YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM grew out of the work of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), a 14-year old case and issue advocacy organization working to ensure the education rights of all youngsters. Since AFC's beginning, the organization had been working, through adult staff, to promote students rights. Several years ago, it was decided that peer advocacy, i.e. advocacy for youth by youth should be on AFC's agenda.

The creation of a city-wide youth advocacy "voice" was the idea behind the YES Change leadership program when it was begun three years ago. The aim was to establish a training program in which young people could learn about the institutions (particularly the education system) which impact upon their lives; the aim too was to create a network of young people who could articulate the concerns of young people and responsibly negotiate for change.

The purpose of this guide is to share what we have learned in the three years of our work in youth leadership development. We will present our model, explain its various components, and offer suggestions about how it may be adapted to suit the needs of other groups.

II. SELECTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The selection of young people to work in a leadership program is important and should be done carefully. Our aim has been to create a multi-ethnic grouping of young men and women who typify the teenagers in New York City high schools. We look for young people who are able to relate to other youth, who have similar concerns and who "speak the same language." We try to identify youngsters who are truly interested in being spokespersons for their peers. In the interviewing process applicants are told that everyone is not necessarily "cut out" for this kind of assignment; for example, some may be better suited for desk jobs or ones which don't require public speaking. The difficulty of making the right selection should not be underestimated: we know because we have made mistakes. A considerable number of young people apply for the positions in our core group. They come to our organization after having been first identified by staff in other youth organizations with whom we have worked. We have become familiar with these other organizations through joint participation in city-wide conferences and coalitions.

In our interviews, which are conducted by the project coordinator and the young people, we explain our requirements for working in the program. Trying to ascertain true interest and inclination is difficult. At times, youngsters, because they are in need of a job, present themselves as having this interest when, in reality, they do not. In the interviews, we ask about their activities both in and out of school (e.g., do they belong to student government? do they belong to community youth or church groups?). If the young people have been active in school or in their communities we feel that it indicates an interest in working in a youth leadership program.

We also ask applicants to write an essay about what they believe are the major problems facing youth today. This is done for two reasons: 1) to find out the extent to which applicants think about the world outside themselves and 2) to see the quality of their writing skills. Because the program requires a considerable amount of writing by the young people (letters, testimony, research papers, etc.), the youngsters entering the leadership program must have a basic understanding of

sentence structure and grammar. This is not to say that advanced writing skills are a requirement for entry into the program. We are looking, instead, for young people who have a working knowledge of written English. There are other programs that have as their main purpose the improvement of communications skills. They spend the majority of their time offering remedial help to young people who need it. While certainly a worthwhile activity, this is not the major goal of the YES Change program. Because youth leadership is the goal, we must look for youngsters who already have the basic skills.

Oftentimes the applicants will be asked to accompany the core group to various workshops so they may see the youth advocates in action and what is required of them.

After evaluating all of the factors, selection of members is done. It is explained to those chosen that there is a 1-month probationary period during which time we will see if the youth leadership program is the right work for them.

The following is a copy of the application form we use for prospective youth advocates. Here too is a list of job responsibilities; we have learned that it is helpful to have our expectations spelled out for the young people.

APPLICATION

Name _____ School _____
Address _____ Grade _____
Phone _____ Major _____
Age _____

1. What activities do you belong to in school? _____

2. Do you belong to student government? _____
3. School schedule for September: _____
4. Is there any problem travelling around the city on a frequent basis?

5. Involvement in activities outside of school: _____

6. What is your past work experience? _____

7. Why do you want this job? _____

8. In your opinion, what are the major problems facing youth today? (400 words)

REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUTH ADVOCATES

- ° participation in your school's activities - e.g. student government, newspaper, etc.
- ° willingness to inject Y.E.S. issues into your school
- ° willingness to organize at your school around various issues
- ° participation in education law training at AFC
- ° participation in weekly meetings at AFC
- ° identifying a faculty link at your school
- ° maintaining a journal of weekly activities
- ° participation in Y.E.S. CHANGE training workshops at various community organizations and schools
- ° participation in various workshops hosted by other organizations
- ° participation in period meetings with Board of Education, City Council, etc.
- ° contributing to monthly radio show and newsletter
- ° willingness to work with others in Y.E.S. in an effort to organize around the city

III. TRAINING

The first goal of the youth leadership program is to train young people on their rights and responsibilities as citizens and how to exercise those rights in a responsible manner. This training consists of six basic parts:

- (1) Developing Expertise in the Area of Concern. Our particular focus is in the field of education but the necessity of developing youth leaders who are "experts" is equally important in any other area.
- (2) Oral and Written Communications Skills Building. The young people must learn how to most effectively communicate what they have learned.
- (3) Research Skills. The information being communicated must be accurate.
- (4) Analytic and Strategy Skills. The ability to analyze issues, set priorities and determine strategies is necessary if effective work is to be accomplished by youth leaders.
- (5) Organizing Skills. Again, if an impact is to be made on a "system" (be it the education system or any other) the youth leaders must have the ability to involve others in their activities.
- (6) Work Skills. The young people must learn how to perform tasks in a disciplined way.

We will briefly describe how we work to develop the skills identified above.

(1) Developing Expertise. For this, we have called upon the resources of our parent organization. Advocates, lawyers, parent organizers, and members of our Board of Directors have trained the youngsters about state education law and the Chancellor's regulations. We have brought in many outside experts as well. For example, we have called in specialists to discuss civil rights enforcement, law makers to explain functioning of government, and fiscal experts to discuss education funding formulas, among others. We have found that youth have limited knowledge in these areas. Surely they have engaged in little critical thinking and debate in their schools. Our job has been to expose them to current events, newspapers, media and policy debates.

Although education advocacy is our main concern, we believe it is essential that youngsters understand the larger context in which education problems arise.

Of course, another program must determine its own area of focus and look for community resources which can be called upon to conduct training sessions for the young people.

Related reading materials are a necessary adjunct of this phase of the training. The young people in our program have become very familiar with state education law and with Board of Education regulations.

Another important aspect of developing expertise concerns the structure of the system(s) they want to impact on. The youth advocates in our program, for example, are taught about the hierarchy of the New York City Board of Education. They learn about the roles of the seven member policy-making board, about the jurisdiction of the Chancellor, and about what part is played by the High School Division, etc. They must understand who has responsibility over which programs. The young people learn about the fine line between what is a policy decision and what is an administrative decision. They must understand how the system works if they are to be successful in negotiating with it. We make sure the youth leaders know who the people are that have to be seen and know what buttons have to be pushed if they want things to get done.

It is important not to minimize this area, because lack of knowledge can lead to frustration over the inability to "get things done."

(2) Oral and Written Communications Skills Building.

(a) Oral Skills. One of our major tools for oral skills building is our monthly radio show. Called "YOUTH ON THE AIR," the program has covered such topics as voter registration, the censorship of the student press, and teenage pregnancy, to name just a few. The youth leaders decide upon the topic, research the subject, find suitable guests, work up questions to be asked, and conduct the interviews. Sometimes the shows are "live" and listeners can call in with questions or comments. Other times the youth leaders have done "on the spot" interviews at schools and in communities.

In addition to building oral skills, the radio show helps the youth leaders improve their written skills and their research abilities. The youth leaders have also learned some of the technical skills required in production,

e.g. editing. As part of training, young people were given two months of voice training by a professional announcer.

Other groups considering this model might contact local radio stations and try to get monthly teenage programs. (This might be easier to accomplish in areas with local radio stations which are more likely to accept "less than professional" programming.) This does not mean that "YOUTH ON THE AIR" is not of professional quality -- it is -- but that has been something which has developed through training.

Flyers advertising the radio shows are sent out each month to school newspapers and student governments as well as to community organizations.

Strengthening of oral skills has also been accomplished by the presentation of testimony before such bodies as the Board of Education, City Council and the State Legislature.

Preparing the youngsters to stand up and deliver statements in public has been an involved process. The young people do not enter the program with experience in public speaking. They need to be taught about diction, projection, etc. They need to learn to pause in the right places and how to emphasize important points. Young people prepare their speeches and then they are corrected by the project coordinator. The young people then rehearse them many times. They deliver these speeches to the other youth and coordinator and get feedback; constructive criticism is given. The young people also rehearse in front of a mirror so they may learn about posture and gesturing.

The youth leaders also are called upon to conduct workshops and chair meetings. The young people have learned about responsibilities of presentors and chairpersons through attending meetings conducted by various adult leaders. They have grown to understand "points of order" and "calling the questions" through this exposure.

YOUTH ENGAGED IN SOCIAL CHANGE

2416 Bridge Plaza South
Long Island City, New York, 11101

(212) 729-8866

The youth leadership program sponsored by
ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK, INC.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Thursday, August 25, 1983

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Daniel J. McGlone 729-8866
Jonathan P. Luna 729-8866

WBAI 99.5 FM

presents

"YOUTH ON THE AIR"

produced by

Youth Engaged in Social Change

WHEN: Tune your dial to WBAI on **Wednesday**
AUGUST 31st at 11:20 AM

TOPIC: This month's radio show will feature **NEW YOUTH CONNECTIONS**, the newsmagazine for New York teens which has a monthly circulation of 250,000. Guests will include Keith Hefner, Executive Director, Sharon Asherman, newly elected Editor-in-Chief and Charise Lawrence, staff member.

(b) Written Skills Building. The young people get constant practice in writing. They have a monthly newsletter, "THE YOUTH ADVOCATE," in which they address a wide variety of issues. They also have a column in the newspaper of our parent organization, "THE ADVOCATE." Young people also write articles for their school newspapers and other youth papers. They prepare testimony for the public meetings they address. They write letters to the editor to express their views. They prepare surveys and petitions.

In your town, you can ask the local newspaper for a weekly column of youth concerns. We have included a petition and surveys which were designed by the youth advocates.

Sample Petition

Date: November, 1982
To: Mrs. Christen, Ms. Esmilla, and Senior Class Officers
RE: Senior Dues

We, the undersigned seniors of Murry Bergtraum High School for Business Careers, agree that the sum of sixty dollars is a considerable amount of money and thus has created a hardship on the seniors.

We are aware of the fact that the Chancellor has made provisions for the establishment of senior dues. However, please show where in the Chancellor's regulations it states that dues are mandatory of all individuals of the senior class?

We want to know how the amount of sixty dollars was determined and who the final decision was made by.

We want to know who determines the "necessary expenses" and what they are.

What is the rationale for determining a "necessary expense"? (e.g. senior jersey)

We want to know the consequences of not paying senior dues and what provisions have been made for the "economically disadvantaged".

We request that a formally written response be made to the questions posed in this petition.

.....

STUDENTS RIGHTS LITERATURE SURVEY

- (1) Does your school distribute students rights literature like the attached?
.....

- (2) Have discussions been held (in classes, assemblies, etc.) about the information in this booklet?
.....

- (3) Do you feel the students rights booklet is
very informative _____
slightly informative _____
could be greatly improved _____
- (4) What kind of follow-up is done by student government to make sure that there are no violations of students rights?

Y.E.S. CHANGE is a group of young people from many high schools in New York. We want to make sure that students know and exercise their rights and responsibilities. That's why we have a workshop on suspensions, access to records, search and seizure, etc. We can come to your school to give that workshop at any time. Call us at Y.E.S. CHANGE to set up an appointment for us to come to your school.

Remediation Programs - Are They Working?

1. How do the students find out their test scores?
2. How many times do you have to take the tests?
3. Are remediation classes counted toward graduation credit and, if so, what kind of credit do you receive?
4. Who decides what kids are programmed for these classes? Are the classes mandatory?
5. Who teaches these classes?
6. What other remediation programs are offered?
7. How are the classes paid for?

STUDENTS

1. Do you know why you are in this class?
2. Are these classes helping you?
3. Have you taken the test since you had this class? Did you pass the test?

TEACHERS

1. Do you think the kids are responding to the material?
1. What material do you cover?
3. How do you know what level the students are on?

(3) Research Skills. In order to effectively communicate, the youth advocates must have accurate information. Young people continually read newspapers and do library research. They must keep abreast of new Chancellor's regulations as well as of any changes in state education law. These research skills have to be developed through discipline and through the coordinator working closely with young people.

It should be noted that the young people in this program have not, for the most part, been taught research skills in school. They have not been encouraged to "dig" for information from a variety of sources. Getting them to do this "digging" is, at times, difficult; it is simply easier to use one source. We try to develop an understanding of the importance of obtaining many different viewpoints.

The youth leaders get practice in developing research skills through researching the radio show and articles for the newsletter. Again, this is something that can be done with any area of concern. If your area is housing or health, there are resources in the library, in newspapers, magazines, etc.

(4) Analytic and Strategy Skills enable young people to determine what the problems or concerns are, how they can work on them so that they can effect change and develop strategies to effect change. These skills help the young people determine whether in fact the area of concern is something that can be changed and, if it cannot, to set it aside and identify those areas which can be effectively changed by young people putting pressure on the "powers that be."

Once you have determined what a problem is and what you want to work on, you must try to determine your chances of success. There is an important reason for this: there is no point in starting on an issue that has no chance of your effecting any change at all; it is just frustrating. One of the responsibilities of the coordinator is to find a balance for the young people between frustration and success. It would be unrealistic for them to think that every project that they work on will meet with instant success because that is not the way the real world functions. But, on the other hand, if the young people are constantly meeting with failure in their projects, that is so frustrating that it ends up with their feeling that they will never accomplish anything. A balance must be achieved.

These skills are somewhat more difficult to develop. They sometimes must come about as a result of trial and error. However, given the tools of expertise in the area, the ability to state the problem through communication and the ability to have all the facts through research, the ability to analyze the situation realistically, the young people have some chance of success.

Attached is a letter to the editor of The New York Daily News written by the youth advocates. It was written in response to an article appearing in that paper which the young people felt was derogatory to minority teens. Also included are strategies which the young people devised in an effort to counter the claims set forth in the Daily News article

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Long Island City, New York, 11101

(212) 729-8866

-The youth leadership program sponsored by
ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK, INC.-

January 7, 1982

Mr. Jack Newfield
Editor in Chief
New York Daily News
842 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10003

Dear Mr. Newfield:

Youth Engaged in Social Change is a coalition of young people dedicated to involving youth in issues that affect their lives, education and future.

We were dismayed at your choice of Jimmy Breslin as one of the ten persons to honor last year. We would like you to consider this.

During the month of November, Mr. Breslin ran an article in his column entitled, "The Bible of the Underground." This article was not written by Mr. Breslin, but by a 16-year old aspiring journalist from John Jay High School. The article depicted young blacks and hispanics as marijuana-smoking, graffiti-writing, number-playing thieves. The article even went as far as to say that these traits are the "Commandments" of the streets. In Mr. Breslin's closing paragraph he makes the arbitrary implication that half a million young people live by these "Commandments." Where did he get these figures?

The format of Mr. Breslin's article did not camouflage his real intentions behind publishing it, as we are sure you will see after reading the enclosed copy.

Last month, YES Change interviewed Thomas Ridges on his article. In speaking with Mr. Ridges we found that his intention for writing the article was to depict his immediate neighborhood. Unfortunately, this is not what the article implies. Breslin suggests that half a million youth follow these "Commandments."

Shortly after the appearance of the article we began a letter-writing campaign against the stereotypical image presented by the media. We have gained support from many New York agencies concerned with the advancement of youth. The Head Start Policy Council, the Urban Development Corporation, and City-As-School are a few of these organizations.

We encourage you to reconsider your choice of Mr. Breslin, and we welcome the opportunity to give you our opinion of youth in New York City. We do not feel we belong to the half million youth Mr. Breslin refers to as the "permanent underclass."

We would like to meet with you in the near future to discuss this in more depth.

Cordially yours,

On November 10, Jimmy Breslin printed in his column an article by Thomas Ridges, a 16-year old junior at John Jay High School.

The article was the way he personally saw conditions in his neighborhood of Williamsburg Brooklyn. Ridges stated that the people he lives around follow 10 commandments which he listed as "Thou Shalt Steal", "Thou Shalt Stay Out of the Joint", "You Must Smoketh Cheba" (Reefer), "Thou Shalt Watcheth for the Cops", "Thou Shalt Tag Up", "Thou Shalt Loveth Thy Mate", "Playeth the Numbers", "Watcheth Your Back", "Respecteth Thy Mother", and "Hateth Thy School". Jimmy Breslin wrote a conclusion to Ridges' views on his neighborhood saying that the 10 commandments he listed are "representative of the thinking of the approximately half-million young people who are called 'minority' and form a permanent underclass in New York."

The article branded and down-graded minority youth in the worst way. Youth Engaged in Social Change was outraged at the appearance of these statements. We at YES Change feel that it was abusive, irresponsible, unreasonable and racist of Jimmy Breslin to print this article in his column and attribute this behavior to a half-million young minorities. It's just inaccurate to say this!

RESPONSE TO BRESLIN PIECE

Possible strategies:

- 1) letter to all organizations friendly to AFC expressing our outrage and urging them to send letters to the editor
- 2) short letter to the editor of the Daily News expressing our outrage
- 3) longer letter to Paula Bernstein, editor of POINTS OF VIEW in the Daily News, specifically mentioning Breslin piece but also commenting on the generally negative youth view (particularly negative Black youth view) of the media
- 4) same letter as #3 to Amsterdam News and Village Voice
- 5) op. ed. piece for the Times commenting on the generally negative youth view of the media (not mentioning the Breslin piece because the Times won't print it)
- 6) letter to Breslin requesting that an article written by YES Change on the positive aspects of youth
- 7) getting in touch with
 - Aida Alvarez - Channel 5
 - David Diaz - Channel 2
 - Geraldo Rivera - Channel 7
 - Gil Noble - Channel 7and trying to get them to interview YES Change
- 8) getting in touch with community affairs directors at various television and radio stations to try to get time to address this issue

(5) Organizing Skills. Developing skills in the area of organizing is not a simple task. But to be an effective youth leader you must reach other young people. This aspect of training can be characterized as "on-the-job-training." Each of the young people working in YES Change is required to do work in his/her community and school as part of learning the skills of organizing and working with other people. They must be involved in student government and/or a community youth group. The coordinator of the program and young people conduct weekly meetings in which they discuss what has been going on in various community and school groups and get ideas from each other on how to handle particular problems and how to raise issues.

Young people, for the most part, are not used to the idea of getting themselves organized to achieve a goal. Creating an awareness has to be the first job. The youth advocates identify problems in their schools, bring them to the attention of other students and work with them on formulating a remedy. The YES Change youth advocates are active in student governments and school newspapers, continually raising issues and getting discussions going. Their task is not easy. It is helpful for them to be sharing their experiences and problems with other youth advocates.

This has been an effective method of getting young people involved in organizing other people. Many have become leaders within their schools and community groups.

(6) Work Skills. We would be remiss if we did not include training in the area of developing good work skills.

The youngsters are made aware that this is a job and that they must take it seriously. What they do matters. They must be in attendance every day; they must be punctual; they must be prepared to do other than the glamorous work of writing the newspaper articles, preparing radio shows, and speaking before the City Council. They must learn to do the "nitty gritty" work of sending out mailings, making phone calls, and typing (all are required to learn how to type). The young people at times feel that this "nitty gritty" work is not part of their job but it is made very clear to them that it is. They are responsible for maintaining daily logs to record how their time is spent and what they have learned. They are responsible for completing assignments on

time. It is felt that this is not only necessary to develop the discipline needed to be a good youth leader, but it is necessary to develop that kind of discipline for the job market in the future.

This is the log for which the young people are responsible:

YOUTH ADVOCATE LOG

DATE _____
NAME _____

ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE DAY:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

ONGOING ASSIGNMENTS:

- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

PROGRESS ON EACH ASSIGNMENT:

- 1) _____
.....
- 2) _____
.....
- 3) _____
.....
- 4) _____
.....
- 5) _____
.....
- 6) _____
.....

CONTACTS MADE:

.....

IV. HOW TRAINING HAS BEEN USED -- WORK ON VARIOUS ISSUES

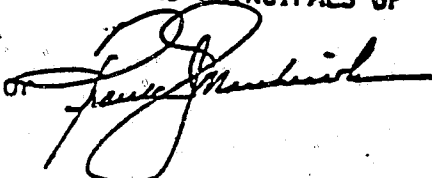
The young people have identified a number of issues as key and devoted much time and energy to them. The issues include voter registration, making student government more meaningful, dissemination of students rights literature, censorship of school newspapers and the mandating of high senior dues.

(1) Voter Registration. Over a year and a half ago, the youth leadership program began to work on the issue of voter registration. The League of Women Voters was very helpful in getting us started. Along with other youth groups, they pressed the New York City Council to pass a resolution which called upon the New York City Board of Education to make voter education and registration for eligible students a priority. This was passed by the City Council. Next came the task of getting the Board of Education to adopt voter registration and education as a priority. This too was done. The young people learned that securing these resolutions was the easiest part of the job. Implementing policy, the young people have learned, is much more difficult. First came a memorandum from the Board of Education to all principals mandating that they formulate voter registration plans for their high schools. They were given over six months to get things started. The young people could not understand why it would take so long. As it turns out, it has taken much longer and the young people have learned, as one put it, that "the wheels of the bureaucracy turn very slowly." They have met many times with Board of Education officials in an effort to prod them into getting things to move faster. The young people devised a simple survey to determine how effective voter registration has been in the high schools. YES Change conducted this survey and discovered that voter registration has not been as effectively implemented as the Board of Education had hoped. The young people brought their findings to the officials. We also brought our offer of assistance to the Board of Education. Through our workshop presentations and organizing efforts we have made contacts in most of the high schools in New York City. We expressed our willingness to use our network of young people to help. The young people suggested to the Board of Education that they set up voter registration at high school graduations and, in fact, carried this out.

Clearly, voter education and registration can be done in your community. We would suggest that you contact the Board of Elections and the League of Women Voters in your area. Perhaps you can get the local board of education to mandate a voter registration drive. The attached New York City Board of Education circular may be helpful in your efforts.

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

TO : COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENTS, ALL SUPERINTENDENTS,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS, HEADS OF OFFICES AND PRINCIPALS OF
ALL DAY SCHOOLS

FROM : Frank J. Macchiarola, Chancellor 

SUBJECT : Voter Registration

ABSTRACT

The Board of Education, at its September 2, 1981 meeting, approved a resolution declaring it the policy of the New York City Public Schools that voter registration information and materials be made available in the schools to students of voting age as part of the instructional program. This circular implements the policy by outlining planning and reporting requirements.

1. PROGRAM DESIGN

Each high school principal shall design a voter registration program to suit the particular needs of the school. The program will have the approval of the high school superintendent.

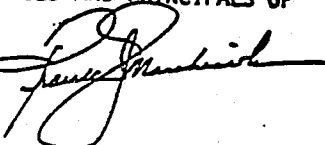
2. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENT

Included in each school's voter registration program shall be a study unit, integrated with the instructional program of an appropriate department, which focuses on the topics of citizenship, governmental processes, and voting.

3. COLLECTION OF DATA

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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2. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENT

Included in each school's voter registration program shall be a study unit, integrated with the instructional program of an appropriate department, which focuses on the topics of citizenship, governmental processes, and voting.

3. COLLECTION OF DATA

- 3.1 Principals shall submit a description of the school's voter registration program to the respective superintendent for approval by December 21, 1981.
- 3.2 Superintendents will forward all approved program descriptions to the Office of Student Affairs, 362 Schermerhorn Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217, by January 15, 1982.
- 3.3 Principals will report the number of new voters registered from the school population to the respective superintendent by June 4, 1982.
- 3.4 Superintendents will report the number of new voters registered to the Office of Student Affairs by June 30, 1982.

4. INVOLVING THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

It is suggested that, if the relationship is not already in effect, principals enlist the cooperation of the Board of Elections in designing and implementing their voter registration programs, particularly to obtain voter registration materials.

5. INVOLVING OTHER VOLUNTARY GROUPS

It is further suggested that principals enlist the aid of non-partisan voluntary groups (such as the League of Women Voters, the Foundation for Youth Involvement, League of Disabled Voters, or a similar appropriate organization) in obtaining voter registration information and materials.

6. Inquiries pertaining to this circular should be addressed to the Office of Student Affairs, Division of High Schools, 362 Schermerhorn Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217, telephone number 596-6240.

(2) Meaningful Student Government. Making student governments more meaningful has been one of the projects taken on this year. This has involved education of two groups -- school officials as well as student leaders. In most schools, student governments are responsible for organizing school dances, senior trips, and pretzel sales. This has been the role designated for the young people by the adults and this is the role they have played. Getting the adults as well as student leaders to think differently has not been easy; young people many times are resistant. The young people in the leadership program have been in discussion with the Director of the Office of Student Affairs, with borough-wide gatherings of coordinators of student affairs, teachers, and student governments of various schools; they have also raised the issue of the need to give students more decision-making powers in student newspapers. Some student governments have begun to take the lead to push voter registration in their schools. They have also urged that they be allowed to have input into curriculum and discipline matters. The young people have submitted a model discipline code (see below). Perhaps the young people in your program can use it as a model for their own.

YES Change's Suggestions for a Model Discipline Code

1. Cutting

- a. Teachers should send cut cards to a "cutting coordinator" who notifies the student.
- b. Students have three days from notification to clear the cut, if they had a bona fide reason to be away from class or, if in fact, they were in class.
- c. If the student does not clear up the matter, a cut card is mailed to the parent.
- d. After three cut cards are sent out to the parent, the parent is called by an attendance teacher.
- e. After the fourth verified cut, the parent is called into the school for a conference with an appropriate dean. Attendance teachers, guidance counselors, and the teachers

in the cut classes may also be included. The purpose is to discuss the reasons for the cuts, ways of solving any problems the student has that are affecting attendance, and the consequence of further cuts.

- f. Parents are called in the event of any further cuts.
- g. The ninth and all subsequent verified cuts go on the students' permanent record. Students may apply for expungement of cuts from their permanent record upon graduation. Such requests will be granted where students have demonstrated significant improvement in attendance since the time the notation was made.
- h. Cutting per se is not grounds for lowering grade or class failure, except where teachers have announced that a percentage of the grade will be based on classroom participation; grades may be affected accordingly.
- i. Teachers should not set standards for attendance other than the school standards. Rather, they should fully enforce the school standards.

2. Truancy

- a. Any absence for which the student presents a note or school-issued card signed by the parent or treating physician shall be considered an excused absence. If the parent is authorizing or requiring a student to be absent for a reason which school officials feel is inappropriate, a dean or attendance teacher should discuss this with the parent, but the student should not be penalized.
- b. Only one person in the school should be authorized to make initial determinations as to what constitutes an excused or unexcused absence. Individual teachers should not make their own determinations.
- c. Parents should present a card whenever their child is absent from school. If the card or explanatory note signed by the parent is not submitted by the student, the absence is considered unexcused.
- d. When three such cards are sent out by the school without response, the attendance teacher should call the parents.
- e. If a fourth card is sent out without a response from parents, the parents should be asked to attend a conference in the school with a guidance counselor or

assistant principal. The conference should include a plan to make up work missed due to absences either with the classroom teacher or through an independent study under the supervision of another teacher.

- f. If a student misses one fifth of the total school days in a given semester due to unexcused absences, a notation should be made on the student's permanent record. Students may apply for expungement as per 1. (g) above.
- g. As with cutting, truancy per se is not grounds for lowering of grades or class failure.

3. Lateness

- a. If a student misses up to ten minutes of class without excuse, it is considered a "lateness." Any more than ten minutes without excuse is a cut.
- b. If a student is late at the beginning of the school day because of transit delays, it should be considered excused. One person in the school should be in charge of being in communication with the MTA so that school knows about bona fide transit delays.
- c. Three unexcused latenesses are the equivalent of one cut.

The following article on student government was written by one of the youth advocates for AFC's publication "THE ADVOCATE."

Lack of Democracy in Student Government

Dear Advocate Readers:

Education provides the basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Beyond this role there exists yet another: learning about citizenship in a democracy.

Education in the high school is supposed to prepare youth for responsible citizenship by allowing students the opportunity to experience and learn what democracy is and how it functions. "The teacher is responsible for creating a climate where empathy and trust can grow and in which respect for individual opinion and interest in the reasoning process itself are consistently demonstrated," according to *Citizenship in New York City*, published by the Board of Education's Division of Curriculum and Instruction. Students are supposed to learn:

- support for the existence of law in a democratic society
- respect for the rights and property of others
- concern for the consequences of one's individual actions
- government by consent of the governed
- participation in democratic civic government
- rational decision-making

I can cite several examples in my academic vocational high school that show how these basic social values are not always encouraged by the school administration. Instead of promoting student involvement, decisions are made by fiat. The school, instead of making a student think, often tells a student what to think. Participation in student government provides students the opportunity to take an active role in ensuring the principles of liberty, justice, and equality within their schools. Hopefully, they will be able to do the same in the adult society.

In my school, however, it seems that the school administration and faculty advisors, appointed by the principal without student consultation, prefer to channel the energies of students into trivial social activities. Young people are pacified with talent shows, movies, basketball games and dude ranch trips.

As a consequence, the school is programming apathy among student government leaders. Student government has become a euphemism for a social club.

I have found that student government faculty advisors themselves have encouraged students not to make change. The adults seldom set an example as initiators of change. This further advances the programming of apathy.

For these reasons student government has been unable to effectively deal with the real issues of the school. For example: 1) Why don't we have a school newspaper? 2) Why are students still being required to purchase and wear school gym uniforms? 3) What has been happening to the profits from the Student Organization store?

Just this past year, the Legal Studies program was terminated from the school's curriculum. There was no consultation with faculty and/or students before the announcement was made.

The students who generally have been interested in activism and critical thinking have been Legal Studies students. Legal Studies students were encouraged to establish their own thought patterns through reasoning and questioning. We were taught to practice democratic principles in school. Now we are silenced and the school has lost a valuable student asset. The school administration responded that the school was trying to promote a "business atmosphere." But are not critical thinking, free inquiry, and understanding of the law important skills for business or any workplace? Is the message that we are to give up these values as workers? I hope not.

I have been advised that I should go about my business and concentrate on getting my diploma on time. But, if I am discouraged from practicing democracy in school, will I be able to protect civil liberties as an adult? Democracy is about sharing power. Sometimes I think schools and society are afraid to share power. A "silent majority" of students who later become a "silent majority" of adults may make it easier for those who presently have power to govern. But, it is dangerous if we want a government which rules by the consent of the governed.

As part of YES CHANGE, I am going to work toward encouraging every student to demand a more democratic environment in our schools so, that when we leave school we are prepared to exercise our rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democracy.

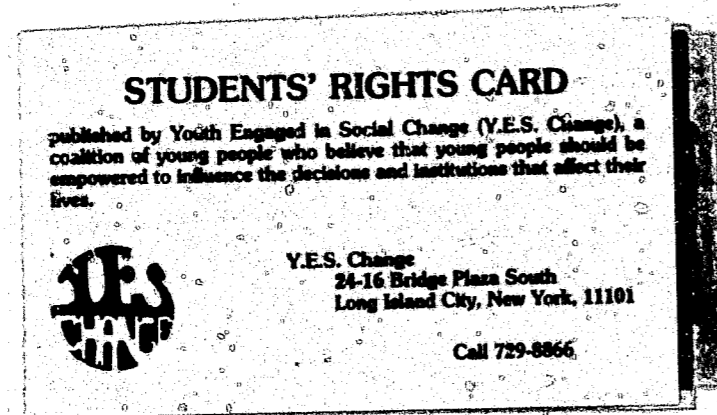
Michael Valentine
Student

Michael, a 17 year old senior who is active in his student government, has recently joined Youth Engaged in Social Change.

Editor's note: We encourage students to send their views to Y.E.S. CHANGE.

It should be noted that recently a young person from our leadership program was selected to serve on the Board of Education Task Force on School Safety.

(3) Students Rights Literature. In New York City it is mandated that every high school student, upon entering public high school, receive a list of rights and responsibilities. Yet for two years, the Board of Education had not made these pamphlets available to students. The young people undertook to find out why. They met with Board of Education officials and were told that there had been several changes in the regulations and that the pamphlet which had previously been distributed was being rewritten. The young people expressed their interest in being part of the process. The Board of Education agreed and they prepared a draft. The young people soon learned that the process was more complicated than they thought. They met with a total of 12 officials during this period. Still no final document. In the meantime the young people, working with AFC staff attorneys, prepared and distributed a student rights card.



When the final draft of the Board of Education pamphlet was, at last, completed, it included many of the points suggested by the youth advocates. The youngsters were amazed that the writing of a two-page pamphlet had taken the Board of Education over a year to complete. Had it not been for the continuous pressure of YES CHANGE, the process would have taken far longer.

While working with the voter registration and students rights literature issues have certainly been frustrating experiences, they have been important ones for the young people to have. Success in life does not generally come over night; persistence must be learned and practiced.

(4) Other Issues

Censorship. In many schools principals have restricted what may be included in school papers; they have disallowed articles which they feel may cast an unfavorable light on their schools. The young people felt they were being limited in their freedom of expression. In response, YES Change organized a series of workshops on the rights of student journalists. Articles which were formerly not permitted are now printed.

High Senior Dues. Recently the youth have challenged the mandating of high senior dues for students (ranging from \$35 to \$65) as a discriminatory burden on poor and low income families. They have developed petitions and letter-writing campaigns and brought this matter before their student governments and principals.

V. OUTREACH

Workshops are given at schools and community groups. One and a half hour sessions are held to give students information about their rights and responsibilities. Time is always saved for a question and answer period at the end. The topics that are discussed by the youth advocates are suspensions, access to records, discipline, and search and seizure. All of the young people are trained in each of these topics. Lawyers and advocates explain the various regulations and help the young people select the salient points to include in the workshops they present. When the young people conduct sessions for school and community groups, they take turns for being responsible for the different topics, e.g. if a youth advocate takes responsibility for presenting the section on access to records this week, he/she may handle suspensions in next week's workshop.

The topic of responsibilities is an important part of our presentation. The youth advocates talk to these young people, many of whom have been suspended and are experiencing difficulties in school, about the need to apply themselves. They stress their responsibility to act in cooperative ways and urge them to get involved in their student governments and newspapers, etc.

The young people are urged to join with YES CHANGE in various issues. Other young people have become involved in voter registration. We have also enlisted the support of youth in the production of radio shows. Young people contribute articles to "THE YOUTH ADVOCATE." The young people work with others on city-wide conferences. The importance of working jointly with other groups cannot be stressed enough.

The young people are involved in city-wide youth councils which draw upon youth from the entire city. The young people are involved in their student governments and they talk to the young people in their schools. Many now work on their school newspapers. They are involved in groups in their communities and discuss the issues raised in YES CHANGE through these avenues. We feel that we have reached several thousands of young people. The youth are now working with others to organize a city-wide youth coalition.

VI. EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS

The major goal of the program is to train young people so that they can take on roles as responsible adults in this society and so that they can have an impact on the institutions that affect their lives.

Outlined below are some of the ways in which we measure the effectiveness of the YES CHANGE leadership program as well as the progress of the individual youth leaders:

- (1) The number of workshops that are conducted by the young people.
- (2) The attendance at these workshops.
- (3) The response of the young people in attendance.
- (4) Self-evaluations by the young people as well as evaluations by the project coordinator. Progress made by individual youth leaders is measured through determining improvement in writing and verbal skills and the ability to analyze and act on the issues.
- (5) The written evaluations by the workshop audiences. We are including a sample of the evaluation form we hand out at the end of each session. We ask that people in the audience fill them out, explaining to them that their comments will help us improve our presentation.

YES CHANGE

ORGANIZATION _____

DATE _____

EVALUATION

This questionnaire will help us to know if we are presenting our material in the best possible way. Please fill it out and return it to us after the meeting. Thanks.

- 1) What did you expect to learn from the meeting today? _____

- 2) Was the presentation
___ a. informative
___ b. not quite informative enough
___ c. waste of time
- 3) Were our people
___ a. dull
___ b. well organized
___ c. poorly organized
___ d. interesting
___ e. uptight
- 4) Was there
___ a. the right amount of lecture and discussion
___ b. too much lecturing
___ c. too much discussion
- 5) The workshop was
___ a. too long
___ b. just right
___ c. not long enough
- 6) Do you feel the information you got today will be useful for you? How? _____

- 7) Do you have suggestions how we can make our workshop better? _____

- (6) Another measure of the success of the outreach program is whether young people from schools and community organizations participate in the activities of the youth leadership program. Young people have joined us at Board of Education meetings; they have participated in petition and letter-writing campaigns; written articles for the newsletter and reprinted articles from our newsletter in school newspapers and helped to produce our radio shows.
- (7) One long-term way in which we have measured the effectiveness of our program is whether the young people have gone on to college and gotten involved in student governments and newspapers. Although several young people in the program were on the verge of dropping out of high school, all have gone on to college. All are involved in extra-curricular activities.
- (8) The effectiveness can also be measured by whether we can demonstrate specific accomplishments as a result of our efforts. Evidence of but a few are included here:

Letter from the Chancellor commending our work on voter registration

Copy of Board of Education pamphlet on students rights and responsibilities

Reprint of YES CHANGE article in city-wide New Youth Connections newspaper



ANTHONY J. ALVARADO
CHANCELLOR

BOARD OF EDUCATION
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
110 LIVINGSTON STREET
BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11201

11a
TOTAL

JUL 6 1983

June 30, 1983

Mr. Daniel J. McGlone
Student Advocate
Advocates for Children
24-16 Bridge Plaza South
Long Island City, New York 11101

Dear Mr. McGlone:

It is commendable that your organization has recognized and responded to the need to involve young people in the electoral process as soon as they are eligible to vote. This is a necessary and important goal which we applaud.

The high schools have been working diligently to implement a variety of programs to encourage voter registration among students. A large number of schools have used voting machines for student elections, demonstrating the use of the machine so that students will be familiar with it when local and national elections are held. Materials on the impact one individual vote has made throughout history have been provided and the issue has been addressed in social studies classes. Student council representatives have visited homerooms to register voters and provide information on voter registration. Many schools have worked with your organization and with the League of Women Voters in a variety of other ways with very positive outcomes.

The high schools have been encouraged to distribute voter registration forms when students pick up their diplomas. There will be tables for students to complete and return the forms at that time. I understand you have offered assistance, if needed, in the manning of these tables.

We are grateful for your continued support in ensuring that every student has the opportunity to become a registered voter.

Cordially,

Anthony Alvarado
Chancellor

AJA:NQ/ns

Rights and Responsibilities of High School Students

NEW YORK CITY
BOARD OF EDUCATION



This statement of the Rights and Responsibilities of High School Students has been developed to advance the best interests of the high school community, to help generate and maintain a climate in which learning and growth can flourish. The statement is an extension of the law and of City Board of Education policy. It is grounded in the premise that in a democratic society, students have both rights and responsibilities, which are herewith enunciated. (March 1982)

New Youth Connections

NYC

Aug 05 1983

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Time Incorporated

3 August 1983

Kathy Jarvis
Youth Engaged in Social Change
24-16 Bridge Plaza South
Long Island City, NY 11101

Dear Kathy:-

I just wanted to thank you for arranging the visit of the six youth advocates from Y.E.S. Change to our office yesterday. Their talk on student rights was very well received by our staff. The presentation was informative, well-prepared and easy to understand. Lots of our staff members came away feeling they had a better sense of their rights and how to assert them. Many were still talking about the presentation today.

In addition, I think the youth advocates planted the seeds of some future NYC articles yesterday, for which I am very grateful.

Sincerely,

Tony McGinty
Tony McGinty

O P I N I O N

Good Race Relations Will Strengthen the Nation

by Janice R. Jenkins - member of YES CHANGE

Racism stems from misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and ignorance about the diverse cultures of the people who comprise our country. These misunderstandings account for faltering race relations.

Before racial conflicts can be resolved, two steps must be taken: 1) people will have to develop more pride in their own cultures (raise their consciousness and feelings of self-worth), and 2) people will have to be exposed to other cultures on more personal levels, to break down the destructive, prejudicial attitudes they harbor.

In New York City, our schools are an ideal outlet from which we can help promote positive race relations. With the Board of Education's Program for Citizenship Education, and parents' and teachers' concern for better education and welfare of the students, all can cooperate in establishing programs that will encourage better race relations.

Cooperation among parents, educators, and students is essential because all three groups play crucial and instrumental roles in shaping our society.

THREE APPROACHES

I suggest three programs, including: 1) Martin Luther King, Jr. Recognition Day, 2) Culture Appreciation Classes, and 3) Summer Camp Projects for Better Race Relations.

First, on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, schools should be in session. Were he alive today, Dr. King would probably not want New York City schools closed on the day commemorating his birth. The schools should be kept open for a day of reflection. On his birthday, schools could conduct special programs to reinforce Dr. King's beliefs that all men are equal and that all men, being great in the sight of God, should have respect and faith in themselves and others. This project would greatly help to instill attitudes of "somebodiness" (which is very much lacking) in students today (especially minority students). When students learn to be proud of their cultures and achievements, they will be able to "go for it" like everyone else.

Second, schools should establish required cultural appreciation classes to coincide with history and foreign language studies. These classes could be structured to cover such units as Black studies and Hispanic studies. Students would be required to analyze the problems, goals, and lifestyles of these groups. Students could do reports on prominent individuals of a particular culture, citing their contributions to America.

As final projects, students could be asked to write evaluations of the class, which would probably help them to confront and deal with any prejudice. The course itself would probably spark some curiosity among the students. They would

come to know the meaning of respect.

In addition, schools could sponsor cultural appreciation seminars on appointed days, in which all city residents could take part.

Finally, with help from Girl Scout and Boy Scout type organizations, schools should run special summer camp programs in which students would spend 3-4 weeks of their summer with a family of another culture.

In this project, students would get firsthand knowledge and experience of how people of another culture live. This program, though, must be carefully planned and participants should meet certain requirements, such as having a desire to participate. At the end of the program, the family and the student should write evaluations of the program, which would be instrumental in determining whether or not the program was successful in improving race relations.

I believe that with the proper support these projects could be successful. By instituting these programs we will show the nation that we are concerned about racial troubles and that we are taking steps toward eradicating them. When we wipe out the ignorance, the nation will progress.

These ideas offer a chance for us all to get involved, to learn about each other, and to help us maintain better race relations.

My motto is: Good race relations will strengthen the nation!

We hope that this guide will be helpful for those who wish to organize youth leadership programs in their communities. We have tried to show ways in which some of the ideas which we have used successfully can be adapted to local community conditions.

END