



Getting Youth Involved in Self-Advocacy

What we will talk about today

1. Things to keep in mind when you are interacting with youth
2. Connecting schools to a local self-advocacy group
3. Hold a youth summit
4. GMSA created a youth leadership training geared for self-advocates from immigrant, refugee, and BIPOC communities. We worked with Open Doors for Multicultural Families near Seattle, Washington.



What Messages Did You Hear About Young People When You Were Growing Up?

Go to the chat and click
on this link

[https://www.menti.com/
algas2opmgi2](https://www.menti.com/algas2opmgi2)

Beware!

We hear a lot of negative messages about young people.

Sometimes those old disrespectful messages about youth are bouncing around in our heads.



Don't judge people by their age, consider their experience.

Don't talk to youth in a way that it sounds like you are talking to a child.

Avoid assuming young people won't be able to understand something. Instead take the time to explain information to them.



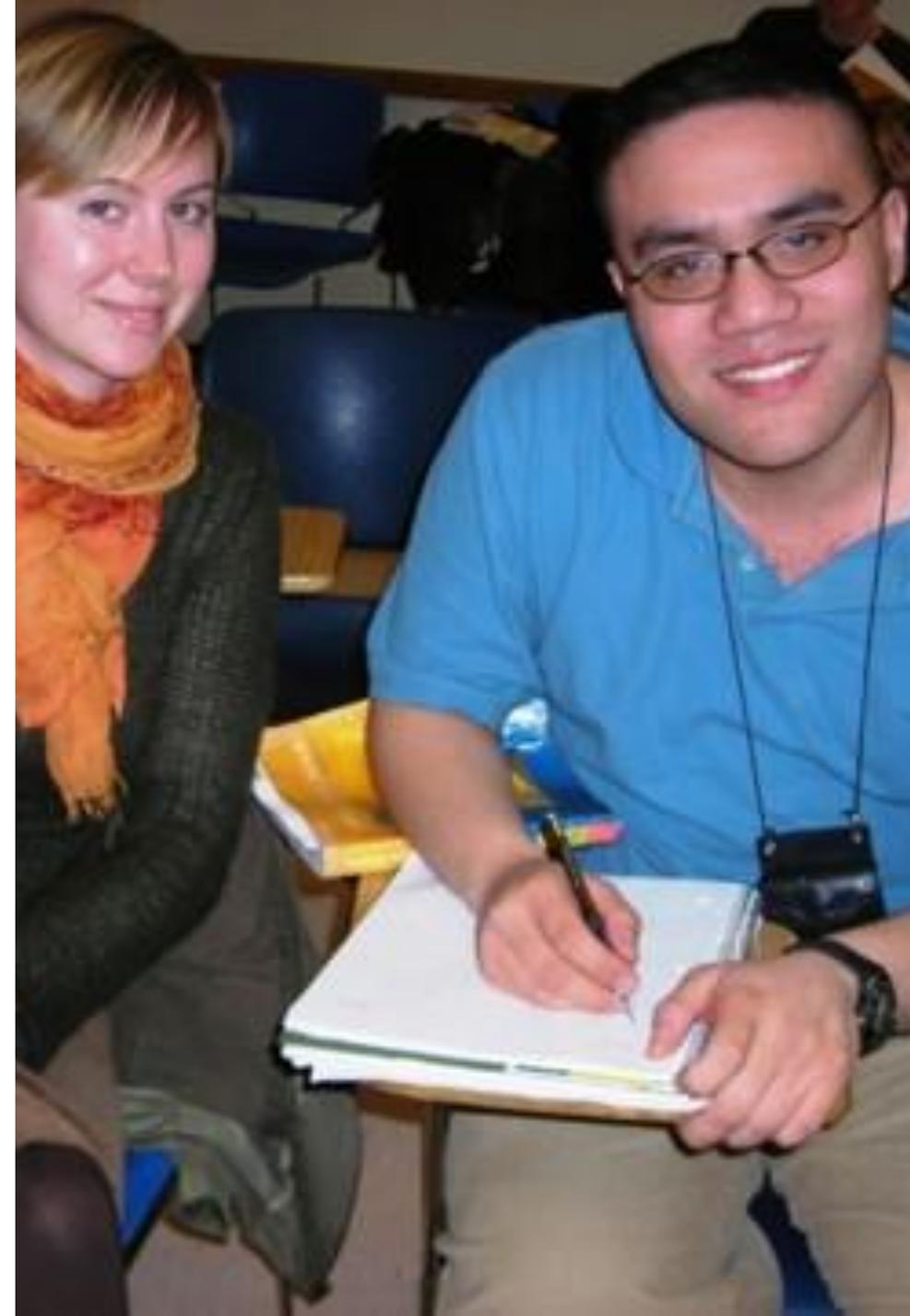
In your group, don't just ask young people to handle only small or not so important jobs.

Try not to be surprised when young people say something intelligent, when they are dressed nicely, or when they are well organized.



SOME TIPS...

- 1. When you meet with students, begin by asking them what they think self-advocacy is.**
- 2. Ask them what they think when they hear the words “independent living”.**
- 3. Ask students where they see themselves beyond high school. Keep in mind this maybe a hard question to be asked. Students may not be able to answer this question the first time.**



Sample activity - I Want To Live Like This



Have 2 tables with lots of pictures showing different ways people live.

First look at all the pictures. Pick 2 photos that fit for you, that show something you'd like for your life.

Okay let's go around and each person will show their picture and tell us about why you picked it.

SOME TIPS...

4. **Self-advocacy can give you the courage to listen to your voice. A peer atmosphere helps you to say what is on your mind. Talking to a peer is different from talking to a teacher.**
4. **Always support youth to make their own decisions. Give them a chance to take control.**



SOME TIPS...

6

Do not judge students. Tell them their opinions are important. Keep your own opinions to yourself.

7

Find meaningful ways for youth to get involved.

8

Remember we are all individuals. When a teen expresses their opinion, they are not speaking for everyone under the age of thirty.



SOME TIPS...

9. Make the meeting fun with lots of hands-on activities.
10. Sometimes youth are reluctant to speak up when teachers, support staff or parents are in the room.

KEEP IT CLEAR
KEEP IT SIMPLE



THE LAST TIPS...

11. Remember students have busy lives. Respect their choices.

12. Set up group agreements or group norms. They should include reminding seasoned leaders to talk as little as possible.

13. A disability rights meeting may be new to youth, so remember to take your time and not go too fast.



THE LAST TIPS...

14. Be careful not to interrupt a young person. Give them time to share their ideas.
15. Create an atmosphere that says it is okay to make mistakes. This can be an opportunity to introduce what we call “dignity of risk
16. Be laid back. Listen. Don’t jump in with an answer.

Give



We are going into breakout sessions

Share you ideas and experiences involving youth in self-advocacy?

What works?

What does not work?





**How have
you tried to
get young
people
involved?**

Local Connections & Youth Summits

1. Always include peer leaders from your local groups when working with high schools. It is important to make those local connections.



1. GMSA holds youth summits every year. [Here are a few sample agendas.](#) This is a 6-hour event where youth learn from adult peer leaders about self-advocacy and ways in which life gets better after high school. We do activities like “Making your Case” which is an activity where students role-play how to ask the people in their life about trying something new.

Including ALL Youth

GMSA created a youth leadership training geared for self-advocates from immigrant, refugee, and BIPOC communities. We worked with Open Doors for Multicultural Families near Seattle, Washington.

We have some [resources for LGBTQ+ youth](#) with a disability who want to "come out" or explore their sexuality.