

Youth Development and Workplace Practices

Building Blocks of Youth Development¹

Emotional and Physical Safety - meeting youths' basic needs as well as building trust and respect.

Supportive Relationships - the existence of positive relationships with peers and at least one trusted adult at the workplace.

Meaningful Participation - youth have opportunities to have a voice, multiple choices, leadership, and a role.

Community Engagement - opportunities for youth to connect and impact on their community in positive ways.

Engaging Skill Building - activities to strengthen interests and build new capacities.

Generalized Youth Characteristics and Workplace Practices²

Youth characteristics listed in the chart below are generalizations and may not apply to all youth at your workplace. Please use the chart as a point of reference to help generate workplace strategies to help you work successfully with youth.

Youth Characteristics	Workplace Practices
Have competing demands on their time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teach youth how to prioritize daily tasks and activities using project management apps and software or by using tangible checklists.
Peers are more important than adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pair youth interns with slightly older or more experienced peers who can act as mentors. ○ Organize regular team check-ins to strengthen employee to employer relationships to create a sense of community among youth interns.
Interested in sense of independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make youth accountable for their work. ○ Support youth in managing their own schedules and hold them accountable for determining deadlines for assigned tasks.

¹ For an extensive list of key principles of positive youth development visit - [Key Principles of Positive Youth Development | Youth.gov](#)

² Matrix adapted from *Northwest National Leadership Training: Successful Strategies for Employers* by Mid-Willamette Education Consortium.



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Need to exercise choice and responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow youth to choose from a selection of projects or tasks that align with their interests and skills. ○ Provide leadership opportunities within projects or team activities and tasks.
Up-front about what they want	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Involve the youth in project development. ○ Ask the youth about their interests.
Appreciates fairness and truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be frank, honest, and nonjudgmental.
Wants to do well but does not know how	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be genuine and objective. ○ Discuss project activities, and/or business expectations (e.g., objectives, agendas, dress code.)
Prefers involvement in multiple activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Involve youth in a variety of tasks. ○ Provide opportunities for youth to engage in cross-functional teams or projects that involve collaboration with different departments.
Underdeveloped time management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assign due dates; review timelines. ○ Model and explain time management skills. ○ Have youth keep a project journal or time sheets.
Lacks self-direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Check in with youth to ensure they are clear on what is expected. Help set goals; the provider staff may be able to help.
Knows everything; influenced by peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elicit and respect the youth's ideas. ○ Provide alternative suggestions and share reasoning.
Learns in short intervals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Give new information in small steps. ○ Provide opportunities for youth to practice and reinforce what they are learning.



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Has already had jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Explore skills youth already have and look for ways to enhance and build on them.○ Offer workshops and training sessions on different topics.
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