

Edited by

**Heartlands International Inc.**

under contract with

U.S. Department of Housing  
and Urban Development (HUD)



Youthbuild Education:

A Handbook  
For Administrators  
and Teachers

Written by Youthbuild USA under contract with  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

## Preface

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Youthbuild Education: A handbook for Administrators and Teachers is one of a series of handbooks for the recipients of HUD Youthbuild grants. The handbook comes in two parts: Part One: Managing a Youthbuild Program and Part Two: Teaching in a Youthbuild Program. There are also Youthbuild handbooks on the construction, counseling, leadership, and job development and retention elements of a Youthbuild program. Each manual is designed to provide a detailed and comprehensive guide to each area, supplementing the Youthbuild Program Manual.

The purpose of this manual is to assist those implementing Youthbuild programs in their communities with setting up systems, selecting the right staff and participants for the program, and laying the groundwork and implementing the components of Leadership and Counseling, On-site Construction Training, Education, and any others that the program incorporates such as Job Development. This manual was developed with the help and insights of experienced Youthbuild program directors and HUD officers who work closely with the programs in their regions.

The Youthbuild manuals were originally developed by YouthBuild USA for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 2005, the series was edited by Heartlands International, Inc. under contract with HUD. Additional publications and materials are available from Heartlands International, Inc., YouthBuild USA, and HUD. We encourage you to contact any of us for more information and assistance.

We would like to thank those who gave their time to help with the editing of this manual. They include Arlene Ballou, Rudy Hernandez, Michelle Loosli, Reggie McNeill, Sherry Mullins, Diane Page, Jake Pfohl, Susan Reynolds, and Jane Yudelman. And a special thank you for Charles Booth, Brad Evatt, Marty Horwath, and Karen Williams of HUD who reviewed and advised us throughout the editing of this manual.

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*"I dropped out because I didn't want to learn. I thought I was above the teachers, I thought I was above the law. School was boring; it didn't make sense to me... Before Youthbuild I was gang-bangin', drinkin' heavy, living day to day, not looking into the future, being out there, being destructive. I looked at my life like Jesse James, and I didn't think I would make it to 21. [Youthbuild's approach to school] wasn't a boring process—it was more like a friend helping you get up on a horse and learning how to ride it.*

*"Youthbuild taught you how to express yourself, look up words in the dictionary. They taught you to be a leader. They taught me how to take care of my family. They taught me a lot. In the school part they didn't do the same old book thing, they used one-on-one learning, pick your brain; they go over it with you until you get it right.*

*"If there wasn't a program like Youthbuild, I'd probably be in the penitentiary serving life or something. If I didn't have my GED, I'd probably be going from job to job. I probably wouldn't have my family with me—it would look pretty gloomy.*

*"Once you've been part of Youthbuild it stays with you the rest of your life. I hope they keep Youthbuild going and spread it all across the United States.*

*"Youthbuild was the only one that prepared me for life."*

—Eric Clark, graduate, Youthbuild, McLean County

Youthbuild Education:

A Handbook for Administrators and Teachers

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# The Youthbuild Program

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## The Handbook: A Reference Tool

The purpose of this two-part handbook is to provide a guide for setting up, managing, and teaching in a Youthbuild education program. It is designed for easy access to information, either as a step-by-step guide, or as a reference tool.

## Audience for the Handbook

- Administrators who are setting up, or organizing a program, and experienced administrators who wish to reevaluate and re-design their education components (PART ONE: MANAGING A YOUTHBUILD PROGRAM)
- Teachers who need to design curriculum, organize the course, and find tips and resources for teaching (PART TWO: TEACHING IN A YOUTHBUILD PROGRAM.)
- Vocational and worksite instructors who must integrate their instruction with the classroom instruction, need greater understanding of how the academic program operates and complements the vocational part, as well as methods for teaching and evaluating students
- Construction and program managers who are designing and supervising education and training components

## What Is Youthbuild?

The HUD Youthbuild program is the only national program for out-of-school young adults that place equal emphasis on five components:

- Basic education towards a diploma
- Skills training towards a decent paying job
- Leadership development toward community involvement
- Adult mentorship toward overcoming personal problems
- Participation in a supportive mini-community with a positive set of values

Youthbuild has attained national recognition as a special type of alternative school reaching the out-of-school youth who are considered the hardest to reach. Most young people come to Youthbuild after having left their previous school and have been “on the street.” They come with widely varying academic levels. Superintendents in several cities and counties have sanctioned the local Youthbuild program as an alternative school to grant high school diplomas and to receive daily attendance funds. To date, Youthbuild students are obtaining their GED and high school diplomas in much higher percentages than students in comparable second chance programs. In addition, Youthbuild graduates are going on to community colleges or other postsecondary education and are earning AmeriCorps education awards to assist them in paying tuition.

## What Makes Youthbuild Unique?

Youthbuild participants spend 50% of their time in education services and activities and 50% in learning on-site construction skills, providing a uniquely appropriate program design for young people who lack jobs, marketable skills, and education.

Most Youthbuild students come to the program with many life challenges. Youthbuild students from across the country report that the school is entirely different from the high school they attended previously. Because of the small size and the community-oriented philosophy of the program, they report feeling safe and respected. Because of the high teacher to student ratio, they report that teachers show that they care about their learning and give them the individual attention they need. Because small group work is encouraged and positive values promoted, they report an attitude of mutual assistance and respect among the students.

*There does come a time when you want to change, but you don't know how and there is no one to help you. Youthbuild staff become like gods to you, because they want you to become the best person you could ever be."*

--Isabel Izquierdo, graduate, PACE/SIPA Youthbuild

While this handbook addresses only the education component, it is the comprehensive and integrated nature of the Youthbuild experience that makes it succeed as a school, as a job training program, as a leadership development program, and as a community development and community service program.

### **What are Youthbuild Goals?**

1. Assist unemployed youth in becoming economically self-sufficient.
2. Enable students to continue their formal education toward whatever goals they set.
3. Encourage students to embrace the idea that learning extends beyond the classroom as a life-long process of self-transformation and renewal.
4. Prepare students with leadership skills and commitment to become permanently engaged in community development.

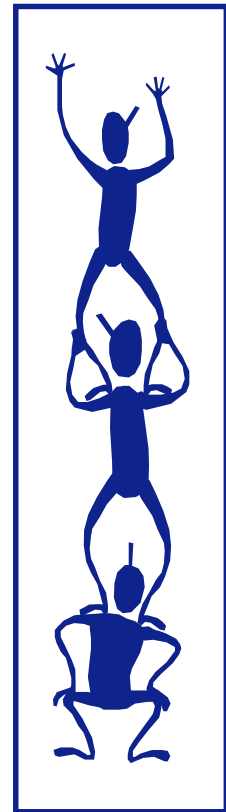
### **What Challenges does Youthbuild Address?**

Youthbuild students may carry with them a history of failure and disappointment in school and carry their apprehension toward re-entering school into the Youthbuild program. For the education component to be successful, several critical elements are required:

- The Youthbuild classroom must address the extremely diverse educational needs and experiences of the trainees.
- The Youthbuild classroom must respond to the cultural and experiential backgrounds of the trainees by addressing issues related to poverty, ethnicity, race, gender, parenting, sexual orientation, violence, and substance abuse.
- The program must be capable of actually delivering on the promise of academic advancement made to trainees by offering the GED or a high school diploma, certificates of mastery, and resources for continuing study in other training programs or higher education.
- The program must create a mini-community in which members are committed to each other's success and all students are supported in reaching their goals.

# PART 1

## MANAGING A YOUTHBUILD PROGRAM





# 1. Starting and Managing a Program

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1. The Target Population
2. Program Goals In Relation To Target Population
3. Types of Programs: GED Or High School Diploma

As with all components in the Youthbuild program, the education program requires effective management. It is critical that adequate planning, coordination, and control be maintained within the academic component to assure success for the young people and the program as a whole. Achieving this success rests largely with the education staff — the teachers, trainers, counselors, tutors and managers — who must be able to create an environment that supports learning.

Such a learning environment must be safe from the violence, chaos, and distractions of the street life so familiar to Youthbuild trainees. Also, it must be an environment that does not replicate past classroom failures experienced by many Youthbuild students. The single most important education element is the quality of the teachers. It is the effectiveness of the relationship between the teachers and the students that will determine the academic success of the Youthbuild trainees and create in the students an appreciation for lifelong learning. It is the job of program managers to plan and organize the program's academic component and then to actively support the work of the teachers to create and maintain the best possible learning environment.

In designing the education component, program managers must address four basic questions:

- Who is the target population for the Youthbuild program?
- Will a Youthbuild education lead to a GED or a standard high school diploma?
- Which organizations are available to help provide instruction to the target population?
- What will comprise the curriculum and how will it be taught?

## 1.1. THE TARGET POPULATION

The HUD legislation defines Youthbuild students as follows:

- They must be between 16 and 24 years old.
- 75% of them must have dropped out of high school.
- 75% must be individuals who are very low income\* or a member of a very low-income family.
- 100% must have "educational needs."\*\*

With these requirements as a starting point, eligible applicants can include individuals with an extremely wide range of academic skills. Reading levels can range from illiterate to 12th grade level, but they tend to cluster between 5th and 8th grade levels.

Many individuals may have learning disabilities, with a need for substantial remediation or English as a second language. By contrast, there will be applicants who already have their diploma or GED, and who want access to the construction industry or want to prepare for college. However, even those applicants with a high school diploma may need basic skills training. Youthbuild programs have found that many high school graduates have roughly the same academic skills as those who have dropped out.

\*“Very-Low income family” is defined in section 3(b)(2) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 as those families whose incomes do not exceed 50% of the median income for the area.

\*\*“Educational needs” are not defined in the legislation, but have been interpreted to mean that the applicant has demonstrated a need and a willingness to spend 50% of the full-time Youthbuild program in the educational services and activities; either to improve basic skills or to prepare for college if he or she already has a high school diploma. Enrolling in the program only for the construction training is not an option.

## 1.2. PROGRAM GOALS IN RELATION TO TARGET POPULATION

Youthbuild programs base their decisions about academic preparation on blending the broad program goals and careful selection of the target population. For example:

- Programs with a priority on getting graduates into the trade unions have tended to select students with a minimum of an 8th or 9th grade reading level so they could be sure to complete their GED or diploma and move into apprenticeships quickly.
- Youthbuild AmeriCorps programs that offer a college scholarship have sometimes tried to select students most likely to go to college, so students can benefit from the scholarship they will have earned through AmeriCorps.
- Programs with an emphasis on developing young leaders for the community have sought to include the maximum 25% of high school graduates and may also select other students likely to succeed academically.
- Programs wanting to create a welcoming community for all highly motivated students have accepted a wide range of academic levels and worked to develop flexible, individualized curricula.
- Programs aiming to include the most-in-need students, who often have nowhere else to turn, have established pre-Youthbuild tutorial programs for students reading below 5th grade level and then let the students move into the full Youthbuild program when they reached 6th to 8th grade reading and math levels.
- Many students who already have diplomas still need support in developing their reading, writing, and math skills to the level required for jobs, to pass union apprenticeship examinations, or to apply to college programs. Programs should assess these students’ skills in detail and develop contingency plans for meeting their academic needs outside of the mainstream GED or diploma-preparation structure.

It is important to make sure that the academic needs of the students selected are matched by the program design and the resources available. It is a mistake to take in students whose skills are either too advanced or too undeveloped for the particular academic program offered, unless the Youthbuild program has the flexibility to provide additional resources.

## 1.3. TYPES OF PROGRAMS: GED OR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Young people who have not completed high school have two options: earning a high school diploma or passing the General Equivalency Diploma (GED). The academic level of the participants influences the selection of the educational component. For example, if a program accepts high school graduates who do not need basic skills training, then the program must provide college preparation and links to local community colleges. Similarly, for programs that enroll students with less than a 6th grade reading level, basic skills training and extensive remediation will be required. For programs that accept students with reading levels below the fourth grade or with learning disabilities, special provisions are required, including teachers with relevant training and extra tutorial resources.

In deciding which certificate program is most appropriate, consider the following factors:

1. Characteristics of the Youthbuild target population
2. Degree of control that Youthbuild wants over the academic program
3. Feasibility of Youthbuild designing and managing curriculum on site
4. Options for community partnerships
5. Resources (funds, teachers, equipment) that might be provided by partnerships with other schools and adult education programs
6. Where it can be located (adjoining Youthbuild offices, at a local high school, or with a community organization), which affects control over the academics and integration with other Youthbuild components
7. Who manages the program (Youthbuild totally or an external organization)

*An in-house program will give Youthbuild a high degree of control over the academic environment and a high level of integration with other program components.*

## A. THE GED (GENERAL EQUIVALENCY DIPLOMA) CERTIFICATE

The chance to gain a certificate, whether it is a GED or a diploma, for completing one's secondary education can be a powerful motivating force for young people. For Youthbuild students in particular, many of whom carry a history of failure in traditional classrooms, working toward and receiving these certificates can be a life-changing experience.

The GED involved passing the standardized tests. Academic preparation, which includes classroom instruction, tutoring, pre-testing, and individual study, does not require state approval and can occur formally in a study program or informally through self-study.

### *ADVANTAGES OF THE GED*

- Gives programs more independence and flexibility in operating the program
- Less rigid regulation in the amount of time students spend in the classroom
- Less rigid regulation in the qualifications of the teachers
- More flexibility in instructional design and preparation
- Not bound to fulfill requirements of any other agency or local school district
- Provides more flexibility with student selection criteria
- Can offer an individualized approach that provides beginning students with appropriate Adult Basic Education (pre-GED basic skills) instruction and channels GED-ready students into a GED-oriented curriculum
- Students can progress at their own speed and are not bound to any external requirements
- Passing the GED may require higher reading skills than earning credits or passing state graduation competency exams

### *DISADVANTAGES OF THE GED*

- Less flexibility in choosing the curriculum material than in high schools.
- Some studies show that students with GEDs are less likely to be hired than students with traditional high school diplomas.
- Students with only GEDs are limited in their eligibility for the military.
- Teachers may focus solely on the skills needed to pass the test, rather than the competencies and skills for broader intellectual development.

- Much of what is taught on the construction site does not directly apply to the taking of the GED tests. Whereas, in many diploma programs, credit can be earned for construction site learning.

### *DECIDING WHERE AND HOW TO DELIVER THE GED*

Youthbuild programs can deliver GED instruction either in-house or by collaborating with another organization such as an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program, a community college, or a public school. Here are important steps and factors to consider early in the decision-making process:

- Determine your program's need for resources (financial, physical, materials) through collaboration with community organizations.
- Weigh the need for other resources against the need for Youthbuild control over the management of the education component, such as staff, schedule, program design, student assessment, and integration with other Youthbuild components.
- Investigate the state guidelines for the GED.
- Determine Youthbuild's capacity to teach the necessary GED skills

### *ADVANTAGES OF IN-HOUSE GED PROGRAMS:*

- Control over the quality of the teaching staff and instructional program
- Ability to change/shape the pace and program design to meet the needs of students
- Flexibility with program start and end dates
- Loyalty of the teachers to the Youthbuild vision and inclusion of them in the staff team

### *DISADVANTAGES OF IN-HOUSE GED PROGRAMS:*

- More intensive planning and program development required
- Teaching staff must be capable of managing the entire education component
- Additional expertise and time required

## **B. THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA**

Some Youthbuild programs have established a high school diploma program and many others have started to explore this option. In most states, the local school system is mandated to educate young people up to the age of 21. Many school districts appreciate that Youthbuild collaboration allows them to offer an alternative for students who have left school without graduating. Often school districts will provide teachers or funds for this purpose, from state average-daily-attendance funds or from district alternative school funds.

The advantages and disadvantages of diploma programs are detailed in the following brief description of the three different forms of high school diploma programs: credit-based diploma programs, competency-based programs, and charter schools.

### *(1) CREDIT-BASED DIPLOMA PROGRAMS*

Credit-based programs are the most common diploma programs in public schools. They require students to earn a set number of credits to receive a diploma, and measure "seat time," that is, the time the student spends attending a required course to earn credit for that course. These programs may be competency-based or charter schools.

***ADVANTAGES OF CREDIT-BASED DIPLOMA PROGRAMS:***

- The local school district has legitimacy for providing education within the community. Districts have the public mandate and resources to carry out comprehensive educational programs. A diploma granted by the school district may be more respected than a GED awarded by an independent agency. In some geographic areas, employers have a marked preference for standard high school diplomas over GEDs. This option may be best for students who are close to finishing their diplomas. Students are sometimes more motivated to seek a high school diploma rather than a GED. In addition, local school districts have financial resources, teaching staffs, libraries, computers, other equipment, and resources that a program might access.

***DISADVANTAGES OF CREDIT-BASED DIPLOMA PROGRAMS:***

- These programs have less flexibility because many schools have specific credit requirements for graduation. Young people who have dropped out of school with few credits will have a more difficult time making up the necessary credits to receive a high school diploma. Some Youthbuild programs that have adopted this model have had to extend the length of the program to two years of full-time participation and even then some students have not been able to complete the diploma. There are also bureaucratic constraints. The hiring process for teachers, administrative paperwork, and programmatic decision making may be cumbersome and time consuming. The school system may retain control over hiring and firing of teachers and the teachers may report to a school system principal rather than the Youthbuild program director. Public school funding may limit ages to 16-21 instead of 16-24.

***(2) COMPETENCY-BASED DIPLOMA PROGRAMS***

A competency-based high school diploma program is one in which a student progresses toward the diploma by demonstrating mastery over a predetermined set of competencies rather than completing credits. Students demonstrate knowledge and skill achievement using a combination of test and portfolio assessments.

***ADVANTAGES OF COMPETENCY-BASED DIPLOMA PROGRAMS:***

- In these cases, a diploma can be earned in one year. These programs are suited to youth who have been out of school for several years and who cannot, in only one Youthbuild cycle, earn the credits required to complete a diploma. If a diploma can be earned by meeting competency requirements instead of through "seat time," many of these students can earn a diploma in one year. These programs measure mastery, so students and teachers can verify that learning has occurred. In addition, students are allowed to work at their own pace on a pre-determined set of competencies in the order they choose. Also, students can quickly assess their own progress.

***DISADVANTAGES OF COMPETENCY-BASED DIPLOMA PROGRAMS:***

- The learning is not self-directed which is an important skill for lifelong learning. The curriculum is planned in advance with a focus on meeting requirements and it allows fewer opportunities for the exploration of new ideas or approaches. Typically, a competency-based program will include a clearly established, somewhat inflexible curriculum with no allowance for experimentation or new material. Finally, these programs can become outdated or may lack relevance for the students.

***(3) CHARTER SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAMS***

Many states permit alternative school programs to grant high school diplomas and gain access to public education funds. However, operating a charter school can be extremely complex and expensive. Contact your State Department of Education. Three factors are critical elements to running an effective charter school:

**Expertise.** You must have a curriculum developer who is well versed in classroom and individualized learning, has the ability to train teachers for an integrated, full-scale curriculum, and has experience in traditional and non-traditional assessment, counseling and career development in a school setting.

**Staffing.** You must have an administrator who understands how to schedule classes, supervise the teaching staff, and oversee student discipline. Teachers need to be trained to teach at-risk young adults the full range of subjects from math to English and science, and know how to facilitate the learning process using teaching methodologies other than lecture.

**Funding.** You must ensure sufficient state funding to support the number of projected students and obtain start-up funding. Per pupil cost is likely to be higher than average.

***ADVANTAGES OF OPERATING AS A CHARTER SCHOOL:***

- Charter schools have the ability to offer a high school diploma and increase marketability in the job market. They can also develop relevant, integrated, project-based curricula and learning environments for out-of-school youth. There will be a revenue stream to pay for instructors, staff, and program expenses. Construction site work can contribute towards a diploma.

***DISADVANTAGES OF OPERATING AS A CHARTER SCHOOL:***

- There may be conflicting needs. Administrators face the challenge of developing an educational model that is innovative and relevant to the needs of multi-level learners while meeting state performance and testing requirements. Staffs require training in new curriculum, educational approaches, and the more comprehensive demands of a high school diploma program. It may be more difficult to find staff compatible with Youthbuild methods, along with the experience, skills, qualifications, and openness to work with a charter school. Finally, HUD-funded Youthbuild programs are required to serve low-income students, but charter schools must not screen applicants based on income level.

## 2. Collaborating with Other Programs

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1. Collaborating with Other Adult Education Programs
2. Collaborating with Local High Schools
3. Collaborating with Community Colleges

Many Youthbuild programs develop a collaborative relationship with other agencies to find, hire, and pay the salaries of teachers. Such arrangements can be mutually beneficial, but certain key factors must be considered. If there is a good organization with which to collaborate, negotiate a formal agreement, discuss instructional approaches and curriculum, and the integration of construction into the overall academic design.

In negotiating with any community organization, the following requirements can ensure success for Youthbuild programs:

**Right of refusal:** It is essential that programs have the right of refusal. In this way, they can interview employees recommended by the school district, but do not have to accept a recommended candidate. Programs should ensure that they have the authority to conduct in-depth interviews in which potential teachers are introduced to Youthbuild's design and purpose. Expectations must be clearly outlined. You should be able to hold district employees to the same standards set for other staff members.

**Right to transfer.** District teachers will undergo the same evaluation process as any other Youthbuild employee. Negotiate for the right to transfer teachers who do not meet performance expectations. If the program does not have the right to transfer those teachers out of Youthbuild, the evaluation process has no meaning.

**Ability to hold teachers to the expectations of the Youthbuild program.** Make clear the expectations of teachers with regard to Youthbuild. Prepare teachers in advance for the required meetings, vacation schedule, and their participation in training.

### *CHECKLIST FOR CONSIDERING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS*

- ✓ The program's track record.
- ✓ Average reading level of its students at the outset and percentage of its program participants passing the GED.
- ✓ Profile of the program's students.
- ✓ Opinions of alumni, especially those who match the Youthbuild profiles.
- ✓ Stability, consistency, and quality of the teaching staff.
- ✓ Experience of partner in working with other agencies.
- ✓ Opinions of staff in those agencies.
- ✓ Partner's willingness to allow Youthbuild to select its own classroom teacher, from a pool of its choosing.
- ✓ Partner's willingness to collaborate on interviewing and selecting the teaching staff.
- ✓ Partner's willingness to allow control or collaboration in hiring and firing. (Most Youthbuild directors would not recommend collaboration without any control over hiring and firing.)
- ✓ Partner's willingness to allocate some of the teachers' time for coordination between the academic and on-site components, both during the initial planning and on a regular basis (at least weekly), once the program is underway.

- ✓ Information from the partner on supervision, support for staff development and training, funding, costs each organization could cover and from what sources, participation in staff meetings and program retreats, and payment procedures.

## 2.1. COLLABORATING WITH ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Some Youthbuild programs—especially new programs-- have developed partnerships with other local organizations, such as, (1) non-profit adult educational, adult basic education (ABE) programs, (2) literacy programs, (3) community colleges, or (4) centers that operate GED programs or skills training centers with ABE/GED classes. Many have experience in working with the population served by Youthbuild. The advantages of this kind of partnership include:

- Having an existing program with pre-established systems and materials
- Ability to offer students a wide range of educational options and, in some instances, skills training courses
- Use of existing community resources
- No duplication of efforts
- Possible revenue stream to fund instructional staff

By contrast, there are two distinct disadvantages: (1) Limited or no control over issues affecting program quality, such as selection of teaching staff, curriculum and educational design, program organization and structure, philosophy, and tone (2) Youthbuild students may be integrated into classes with other students diminishing the important cohesion of the Youthbuild peer group.

## 2.2. COLLABORATING WITH LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS

Collaboration with the local school system for the GED may be an option if individuals can be identified within the system that are willing to be innovative, flexible, and supportive of alternative approaches to education.

There are several advantages to this type of partnership. The local school system will have an existing infrastructure, including the staff, materials, facilities already in place, and they may have the capacity to administer the standardized GED tests. Trainees may appreciate association with the local high school, and the program may gain credibility with funders and other partners by being affiliated with the school. There are also advantages for public school teachers to participating in Youthbuild, including smaller class size, assistance from counselors, the opportunity to be part of a staff team with curriculum development and thematic teaching.

However, structure and goals of the local high school may conflict with Youthbuild. The school schedule may not align with Youthbuild funding cycles or construction schedules, and school vacation shutdowns may not coincide with Youthbuild shutdowns. Youthbuild staff may be forced to give up control over significant elements of the program. Finally, you may be required to contribute to the staff development of district teachers in HUD training and other staff development options.

Before deciding on a school option, check out two other important factors: (1) The school's capabilities, including its attempts to bring back those who have dropped out, and (2) the school's prior effort in seeking out alternative programs to remedy the dropout problem (If the school cannot handle the problem, Youthbuild may have a role to play.).

### *STEPS IN EXPLORING THE SCHOOL SYSTEM OPTION*

1. Highlight the benefits of the program to a school administrator.

2. Find the person responsible for alternative education and convince him or her of the benefits of establishing an off-site alternative program, with the possibility of pooling funds from several sources to address the special needs of Youthbuild students.
3. If the local school system does not have anyone responsible for alternative education, find a senior administrator who is willing to explore alternatives for those students the system has failed.
4. Find out if the system is already sponsoring programs that demonstrate the administrative capability to handle alternative education programs.
5. Find out if the school has:
  - A strong faculty or teaching pool who could work with Youthbuild
  - An innovative and creative principal who is enthusiastic about the Youthbuild model
  - Someone with a sense of urgency who would consider and push for policy alternatives if roadblocks arise related to the implementation of Youthbuild within the system
  - An ability to help with funding
  - A willingness to let the program hire, train, supervise, and fire its own teachers. A Youthbuild director's ability to select, supervise, and dismiss teachers is key to successfully working with the public school system.

### 2.3. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Establishing a working partnership with a community college or a technical college requires a significant amount of planning and negotiating. A formal agreement must be established.

Community colleges can bring significant resources to a partnership and Youthbuild can help the college to fulfill its own instructional mandate. Upon graduating from Youthbuild, trainees can enroll in the college and Youthbuild trainees may be eligible for local, state, or federal financial aid. They may also have access to career services, a library, athletic facilities, computer labs, and other common college facilities.

However, not all community colleges or technical colleges provide GED instruction and many do not administer the GED tests. The structure and close community atmosphere of a Youthbuild program may clash with the institutional bureaucracy of the college. In some cases, the college staff may not be prepared or inclined to work with Youthbuild trainees, which may result in conflict in the classroom or between the administrators.

#### *ITEMS TO NEGOTIATE WITH LOCAL COLLEGES*

1. **Academic Credit for Students.** This credit motivates young people to continue their education after they graduate.
2. **Selection of Instructors.** The Youthbuild director should have input with the selection.
3. **Funding.** The community college will usually pay for the instructor. If Youthbuild provides 20-25 students, it constitutes a class, and the community college receives state reimbursements called full-time equivalents, or full-time student equivalents.
4. **Decision on Location.** Having the instruction on campus can familiarize trainees with college life; however, locating the classes at Youthbuild works better if there are scheduling or transportation problems.

5. **Integration.** The college instructor must be willing to integrate the instructional program with the other elements of Youthbuild, especially integrating vocational instruction with the construction site work and social studies with leadership development.
6. **Staff Meeting.** Willingness of community college instructor or staff to attend Youthbuild staff meetings in order to ensure effective coordination and quick problem solving.

## 3. The Students

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1. Selecting the Students
2. The Orientation Program
3. Requirements for Graduation and Program Completion

### 3.1. SELECTING THE STUDENTS

Programs are encouraged to over-enroll at the outset so that if they lose students in the course of the year, they will still end up with a fully enrolled student body. This way, all students will have the benefit of starting with their peers, rather than coming in later as individuals.

#### A. ASSESSING THEIR LEVELS

The assessment, which should collect information on reading levels, skill range, and past experience in school, will guide individual learning plans and design of the program.

##### *FACTORS REGARDING READING LEVELS*

- Students with 9th grade reading levels and above can undertake a GED or high school diploma program and possibly community college instruction to earn credit toward a post-secondary degree.
- Students require roughly an 8th grade reading level to pass the GED (written at approximately 10th grade level) within a 12-month training cycle.
- Most students who read at or below the 7th grade level on a standardized test, find it difficult to pass the GED exam within a year, so Youthbuild should plan for continuing GED study beyond the 12-month training cycle.
- If students have reading scores below the 5th grade level, teachers should be trained in teaching basic skills and the program should provide individual tutoring.
- Other factors affect success. Example: Out-of-school students may initially test low but, with a little practice, may recover skills quickly.

##### *FACTORS REGARDING HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS*

- If implementing a credit-based high school diploma program, decide in advance if entering students should have a minimum number of high school credits.
- If a program is committed to graduating all or most of the students from high school, determine how many credits students can reasonably earn within the program and the length of time needed to complete the program.
- If students are able to continue education in other ways after Youthbuild (return to school, GED, or competency-based programs), the program has more options and can accept students with fewer credits.
- To avoid disappointing students who are accepted with few high school credits, make it clear that they may not earn enough credits for a diploma within the program cycle.

##### *FACTORS REGARDING SKILL RANGE*

- Consider how broad a skill range can be accommodated by the staff.
- Programs that enroll students with a very wide range of skills — between the 5th-12th grade levels, for example — often have a great deal of difficulty meeting every student's needs.

- Programs should include significant individual tailoring to meet students' learning needs.
- A skill range that is too broad makes it difficult to do large group or small group instruction, unless the teacher is very skilled in setting up situations that permit students to teach each other.

## B. INTERVIEWING STUDENTS

The interview process is critical in a successful Youthbuild program. Now is the time not only to assess the potential of the prospective student, but the appropriateness and willingness of Youthbuild to make a significant investment in that student.

### *TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING STUDENTS*

- Interview each candidate individually and at length, at least half an hour.
- Take time to ask specific questions about experiences in school and interest in academics. (Students do not have to be “good” students to demonstrate enthusiasm for learning.)
- Ask questions that help assess student motivation and interest in making use of opportunities.
- Ask a student to write their answers on an application first, which gives them time to think. It also helps to structure the interview so that the same questions are asked of every interviewee.
- Review the application with each student during the interview and take notes about any additional comments that are made during the discussion.
- Assess student readiness based on your assessment of the sincerity of the responses and the genuineness of their motivation, not on the number of “correct” answers that might be designed to impress or to tell the staff what they think the staff wants to hear.

### *HOW TO FIND THE IDEAL YOUTHBUILD CANDIDATE*

While studying at the Wiener Center for Social Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Ronald F. Ferguson conducted research on participants from Youthbuild programs in Boston, San Francisco, Gary, Indiana, Cleveland, and Tallahassee. He was able to identify certain participant characteristics that correlated to successful completion of the Youthbuild program. These characteristics are discussed below.

**Age (18-22).** In studying Youthbuild participants who fell within the HUD-approved age range of 16 years to 24 years, Ferguson saw a contrast in program completion between those on either end of the age range and those in the middle of the range. Sixteen and seventeen year olds were less likely to complete the program, probably because of immaturity. Twenty-three and twenty-four year olds were often “program shoppers” who were content in the program, but unwilling to make real changes or to take steps to become independently employed. When pushed to make changes they often dropped out.

**Ready to Change.** Participants who expressed a genuine readiness and desire to change their attitude and behavior were more likely to take advantage of the opportunities that Youthbuild presented and to complete the program.

**Self-Determination.** Participants who felt that success was something determined by one's own actions and behaviors as opposed to “luck” or “who you know” were more likely to complete the program.

**Humility.** Participants who demonstrated a sense of humility and who could identify mistakes they had made or expressed regrets for certain actions also showed more willingness to learn

from their mistakes, to take advantage of the “second chance” that Youthbuild offered them, and to complete the program.

**Industry.** Participants who had worked or tried to find a job after dropping out of school rather than just “hanging out” were more likely to complete the program.

**A Plan.** Applicants, who had a specific reason for choosing to apply to Youthbuild and a plan for how this program would get them to a certain goal, were more likely to succeed and complete the program.

At the New Grantee workshop held in Washington, DC in March of 2005, the following questions were proposed to help identify these characteristics in an interview:

Readiness to Change:

1. If you are accepted into Youthbuild, what changes will you have to make in your life?
2. What choices have you made in your life that you would like to handle differently?
3. What do you want to get out of this program?
4. How satisfied are you with what you are doing with your life?

Self-Determination:

1. Why do some people succeed and others do not?
2. Give an example from your past experiences where you overcame an obstacle or problem.
3. Describe your belief on how our own efforts can make a difference.
4. How committed are you to succeeding?
5. If we asked someone who knows you well, to describe your character, what would they say?
6. You are required to be at work at 8 am and your car won't start. What would you do?

Humility:

1. Why did you come in today?
2. What brought you here?
3. Why did you dropout? What could your school have done differently? What could you have done differently?
4. Looking back, what decisions would you have made differently in your life?
5. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What weakness of yours do you think Youthbuild can help you with?
6. What do you expect to change as a result of your participation in Youthbuild?
7. What makes it difficult for you to find employment?
8. Where would you like to be in five years? How can Youthbuild get you there?

Industry:

1. What have you been doing or done during the past year?
2. Where do you see yourself in one year?
3. Have you ever worked, if yes, in what field? What skills do you have?
4. Have you had any type of career exploration training? In what area?

5. What caused you to not complete your education?
6. At this point in your life, what do you think you have been successful at? Why?

A Plan:

Why Youthbuild? Why apply to this program rather than another education or job training program?

See also [Appendix: 12, Sample #2: Interview Questions for Potential Students](#)

## 3.2. THE ORIENTATION PROGRAM

### A. STUDENT ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

A well-organized, intensive orientation period is absolutely critical to program success. The peer group solidarity that is created in the orientation is extremely important and having a graduation class to belong to has great value to the students.

If attrition forces you to bring in new students, enroll them as a group and provide them with an orientation very much like the start-up orientation. Orientation is a time for students to realize that the adults in Youthbuild care about and respect their goals. They will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

### B. GOALS FOR TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS DURING ORIENTATION

Staff should spend considerable time during orientation in in-depth assessment of individual student strengths and their ability to help students:

- Reconnect with dreams and set realistic steps toward achieving them
- Gain a clearer understanding of their strengths, abilities, and educational needs
- Gain a sense of control over their futures
- Understand the relationship between past, present, and future events and decisions

### C. SETTING EXPECTATIONS DURING ORIENTATION

This section of orientation deals with both the expectations of Youthbuild and the trainees in the education program. Expectations need to be clearly articulated and discussed so that the trainees will remember and understand the rules governing their participation.

Expectations of Youthbuild for the Trainees

- Be on time and attend the classroom activities.
- Complete all homework assignments.
- Respect others who want to study in a positive learning environment.
- Ask questions when you do not understand a lesson or assignment.
- Be willing to help others master the work.
- Learn and use good study habits.
- Treat the classroom experience as seriously as the construction activity

Expectations Trainees Can Have for Youthbuild

- Have caring and competent teachers.

- Use the most effective teaching techniques.
- Have up-to-date educational material.
- Explain the goals of each lesson.
- Allow for creativity and student-directed learning.
- Discipline fairly and without bias.

#### **D. SAMPLE CONTENTS OF AN ORIENTATION PROGRAM**

An effective orientation usually lasts at least two weeks and can incorporate the following:

- Introduction to Youthbuild history, vision, and philosophy.
- Goal-setting and team-building presentations and exercises.
- Introduction and overview of program goals and expectations.
- Introduction of staff—their roles and expectations.
- Trainee expectations of program, staff, and themselves.
- Awareness of factors of contributing to trainees' past success and failures and an analysis of barriers to success.
- Conflict resolution skills.
- Examination of issues related to gender and sexual harassment.
- Explanation of issues related to substance abuse.
- Building an appreciation of different cultural and racial groups.
- Listening and communication skill building.
- Review of trainee contract, if the program has one.
- Election of an interim youth policy committee.
- Introduction to the Academic Component
- Goals of the education program
- Curriculum
- Each of the program staff and their responsibilities
- Classroom rules and consequences
- Classroom schedule
- Expectations for student participation
- Classroom recognition system
- Graduation requirements
- Commitments of program staff to students

#### **E. SAMPLE YOUTHBUILD ORIENTATION**

Many Youthbuild programs conduct an orientation or “mental toughness” program at the beginning, with a new group of participants. The orientation can be used as the last step (or test) before selecting who will be enrolled as a program participant. Others use the orientation as the first step in teambuilding for a new group of selected participants.

Following in-person interviews with all applicants, Youthbuild staff invites to orientation those applicants they believe would most benefit from the program and who seem most likely to complete the program. The number of invitees will depend on the number of program slots available. It is best to over-enroll in the beginning of a program cycle because participants will drop out – some during and some after orientation.

The purpose of the orientation is to check each applicant's "mental toughness" – his or her desire to be in the program, willingness and ability to work hard, follow instructions, and get along with others. The orientation can serve to set the tone of a new program cycle or as a final assessment of participants by staff before final selection.

The orientation is designed to expose potential participants to the kinds of activities and demands they will encounter once enrolled full time in Youthbuild. It is also the first step in program teambuilding among participants.

The following is a sample orientation program:

## WEEK ONE

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### *Monday Morning*

**Welcome and congratulations** – The young people who received invitations to the orientation are warmly welcomed. Following roll call, attendance check, or sign-in, staffs enthusiastically congratulate participants. Recognize that out of more than 300 (or whatever number of applications received) applicants, they were accepted (or in the first step in the program). Encourage participants to feel proud of their accomplishment.

**Introductions** – Staff introduces themselves by explaining their role in the program and by telling a little about themselves (hobbies, interests, family, etc.). Each staff member also congratulates applicants and points to something they can look forward to during orientation.

Following staff introductions, allow applicants to introduce themselves. Staff can present a question for them to answer during their introduction – What are you most looking forward to? How did you feel when you got your invitation to orientation? Why do you want to be in Youthbuild? The question should be simple and previously asked during the selection process.

**Program Overview** – Staff gives a brief overview of the goals and activities of the Youthbuild program. This serves as a reminder of what the applicants hope to achieve.

**Orientation Overview** – Staff gives a more in-depth overview of the orientation and explains any rules or guidelines. Programs should set high attendance expectations. Many programs require 100 percent attendance for orientation and allow only one or two tardies. Many programs have also discovered that it is best not to pay participants for their time in orientation because many who decide not to enroll in the program will wait until they get their pay for orientation and then drop out. Participants who are willing to go through orientation without being paid show a positive level of motivation. Programs often compensate those who complete orientation with a special "bonus" or stipend during the first week of actual programming following the orientation.

Whatever rules, policies and procedures a program adopts for orientation must be strictly enforced. If they are not enforced, participants will realize that they can easily "get one over" on staff and will often lose their respect for the program.

**Expectations** – Participants are broken into groups of four or five and asked to come up with two lists: 1) What they expect of staff for the coming two weeks and 2) What they expect of each other. Each group comes up with list of expectations. Staff works on a list of what they expect from participants and what participants can expect from staff. Lists are presented, compared, and contrasted. A final list of expectations of staff and participants is drawn up and posted so all can consult it during the upcoming two weeks.

**Lunch** – On the first day of orientation, the program provides lunch (usually pizza), and staff mingle with participants, talk with them, and encourage conversation.

*Monday Afternoon*

**Roll call** – Attendance is taken four times a day during orientation—in the morning, after morning break, after lunch, and following afternoon break. A participant is absent or late (tardy) if he does not respond when his name is called.

**Overview of Construction Project** – The construction component of Youthbuild is often the part of the program that is most unfamiliar, but also most intriguing to participants. It catches their attention, so it is a good idea to get into the construction component early in the orientation. The construction manager gives an overview of the on-site project. If blue prints are available this becomes an opportunity to do some basic instruction on blue print reading. Applicants can be broken into groups to view blue prints. The construction manager can talk about what the participants will be doing on the site.

**Construction site visit** – Following the overview, participants tour the construction site.

*Tuesday Morning*

**Welcome, Roll Call, Group Warm-up** – It is helpful to have activities that will help participants get to know each other. You can use a “Question of the day” that each person has to answer, e.g., “What is your favorite movie of all time?” “What is your favorite song? Who is your hero?”

**Roadblocks Exercise** – This activity gives participants an idea of what they will be doing in individual and group counseling. Participants are divided into groups of four or five. Each group sits by a very large piece of newsprint paper (6 ft x 3 ft) on which is drawn a road that begins in the lower left corner and winds around the sheet of paper, ending at the upper right corner. The road is meant to symbolize the path from entrance into the program to graduation. Participants are given rectangular pieces of colored paper on which they write out a “roadblock” or potential problem that will prevent them from completing the program and graduating (one roadblock per piece of paper). Participants take turns putting their roadblocks up on the large road illustration and explaining the roadblock to the group. When all the roadblocks are up, participants brainstorm about solutions that will help them break through the roadblocks.

**Math class** – A good first topic for the orientation math class is using a measuring tape and adding fractions. Academic teachers give a talk on “Your Friend the Inch” and teach how to read inches, half inches, quarter inches, etc. on the measuring tape. They also present a basic lesson on adding fractions. Participants are then divided into teams of two and complete a worksheet that involves determining the measurement of all kinds of things in and around the classroom – blackboards, desks, room sizes, etc. If possible, hallways and other offices outside the classroom can be included. The worksheet also includes problems that require adding the measurements. (Example: the length of the blackboard plus the width of the closet door.) When the teams are done the worksheet is reviewed.

*Tuesday Afternoon*

**Construction safety** – Construction staff shows a movie or gives a talk about safety on the construction site and cover basic safety procedures.

**Vocation Ed** – Basic Power Tools – Construction staff give participants hands-on experience with two or three power tools. Demonstrate safe use of each tool.

**Drug Free Workplace** – All staff joins discussion of the need to maintain a drug free workplace and explains the drug testing policy of the program. Becoming drug free is tied to the issue of safety. The big question is: Would you want to work on the construction site with or next to someone who is high? Get a strong group commitment to safety and being drug free.

*Wednesday*

Welcome, Roll Call, Question of the Day, Overview of the day

On-site work/Academic work – Participants are divided into two teams. One team goes to the construction site to work, the other goes to the classroom for academic instruction. After lunch the teams switch places. The goal is to introduce participants to longer continuous segments of both school and work.

*Thursday*

Welcome, Roll Call, Question of the Day

Labels exercise – Expose the participants to another group counseling activity. Staff leads a brief discussion about how people often label others. These labels can range from hurtful stereotypes to complements for good quality. Participants are encouraged to think about how negative labels can hurt or hold back someone, especially if the labeled person believes the label. Participants are divided into groups of four or five and are asked to think of and then share experiences where they have received negative labels. Staff and group members can explore together how destructive such labeling can be (especially labels related to race, ethnicity, gender, and physical appearance).

Following the discussion each participant is asked to come up with positive labels to describe themselves. Staff and participants form a large circle and in turn each person states his new label. Examples “I am a strong, capable woman who is proud to be here.” “I am a proud, intelligent, drug-free African-American who cares about his community.” “I belong to a strong Latino family with a proud heritage and I am an asset to my family.” The idea is to have participants begin to think in positive terms about their identity and to challenge negative labels about themselves they may have unconsciously accepted.

Film – Show a film that portrays a character (preferably real life) who overcomes odds to succeed at some goal. The film “Rudy,” based on a true story, is about a young man from a working class family who was told he was not smart enough to get into Notre Dame University, nor big nor strong enough to make the football team. He does both by working hard and overcoming significant obstacles. Staff can stop the film at certain points to engage participants in discussion as the story unfolds.

#### *Thursday Afternoon*

Welcome, Roll call, Question of the Day

Fun activity – Let participants know that Youthbuild is not all work. Go for a hike, or go bowling --whatever.

#### *Friday Morning*

Community Service Project – Participants carry out a community service project, preferably one that puts them into contact with others in need, e.g., seniors, handicapped, little children.

Scavenger hunt assignments– Participants are asked to separate into teams of four or five. The term “scavenger hunt” is defined and then each team is given a list of the items that the teams will scavenge for over the weekend. Besides silly objects, include such things as a library card or proof of voter registration for each team member. Let teams know that prizes will be given for certain categories – the prettiest “pink thing,” the ugliest stuffed animal, etc. The idea of the scavenger hunt is for participants to keep in touch with each other over the weekend and thus not lose touch with the program.

### WEEK TWO

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#### *Monday Morning*

Welcome, Roll Call, Question of the day

Overview of the week – staff explains the schedule of events.

Scavenger hunt results – teams present their findings, prizes awarded to teams that found all items, and for teams winning special awards (e.g., the prettiest pink thing).

Group Counseling – Counselor conducts a class/discussion on a topic that will apply to everyone in the program such as conflict resolution, anger management, family dynamics, etc.

First aid training – Give Red Cross basic first aid training, preferably resulting in participants receiving certificates from Red Cross.

#### *Monday Afternoon*

First Aid training – continued

Ropes Course preview – staff briefs participants on the Tuesday's all day ropes course activity.

*Tuesday – All Day*

**Ropes course** – the ropes course accomplishes in one day what would take weeks for staff to accomplish in regard to teamwork.

*Wednesday – All Day*

**On-site Construction** – participants get to experience a full day of work on the construction site.

*Thursday – All Day*

**Academic work** – participants spend the entire day in school.

NOTE: Participants can be divided into two groups for the Wednesday and Thursday activities, with groups alternating spending all day at the job site and all day at school. This may depend on staffing issues.

*Friday Morning*

Welcome, Roll Call, Question of the day

Small Group discussion – participants are divided into groups of four or five and discuss what they have learned about themselves during the orientation.

Appreciations – participant and staff give appreciations

Presentation of Certificates of Completion for Orientation – participants are given certificates of completion and are congratulated

Next steps – Staff explain what the next steps are. If the orientation was used as a final step in selection, participants are told they will be notified if they have been accepted into the program. If the orientation was the first part of the program, staff explains the beginning of regular programming.

## F. EXPLAINING YOUTHBUILD TO THE STUDENTS

Use the following questions and answers to talk about the program during both student and staff orientations.

### **How Is Youthbuild different from past schooling experiences?**

- Youthbuild works with each trainee individually to help achieve career and academic goals.
- Uses a “hands-on” approach to integrate classroom learning with learning at the job site.
- Students know that the teacher will persist until all the students learn the material.
- Students can be comfortable asking questions, knowing that no one will make fun of them.
- Students are encouraged to help each other in a cooperative atmosphere.

### **Why is the education component important?**

- Education is important because it (1) prepares students to enter a career-oriented field, (2) provides them with the credentials, degrees, or certificates to enter careers, and (3) helps them obtain the skills to be lifelong learners.
- Education also provides trainees with skills to pass on to their family members and children.

### **What about the education component and assessments?**

- Classroom Instruction will take place every other week.
- Individual Learning Plans will identify academic, career, and personal goals.
- Assessments will guide the academic, vocational, and career components for students.

- Assessments follow two-month segments in many programs. Award ceremonies and merit raises usually coincide with these unit endings.

#### **How does the classroom component complement other Youthbuild activities?**

- It is designed to support and build on the experiences of other Youthbuild activities.
- Classroom activity should prepare trainees for doing the work at the construction site.
- Classroom subjects should be related to skills needed on the job.
- Classroom and job-site instructors coordinate their teaching.
- Classroom subjects should include measurement, mathematics, reading instructions, and writing or communicating job assignments.
- Vocational instruction should include job safety, estimating, teamwork, and other skill areas crucial to doing the work at the construction site.
- The education program should integrate the lesson content with skills important in other Youthbuild components. *Example:* A social studies class to prepare for the GED might have students prepare position papers for public hearings with elected officials discussing issues that affect youth in the community. Students will have practice in public speaking in class before public presentations.

#### **What about career planning?**

Career planning will include short-term objectives, such as getting a certain kind of job after graduation, and long-term objectives, such as attending a technical institute, community college, or university.

### **3.3. REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION AND PROGRAM COMPLETION**

Establish graduation and completion requirements\* before the program begins. These requirements do four things: (1) provide a tool to guide curriculum planning, (2) provide a clear set of measures for reference throughout the program, (3) help instructors and students to stay on track, and (4) provide a sense of accomplishment for students.

Some programs set graduation requirements, but do not explicitly set completion or participation requirements. If students do not achieve graduation requirements, but stay for the entire program, they receive a completion or participation certificate at graduation. Overall requirements can include such factors as attendance, passing of random drug tests, and competencies in construction, life skills, academics, job readiness, and leadership skills. Many Youthbuild programs require graduates to be drug-free as shown by a random drug test.

\*It is not HUD's policy to impose graduation standards on any site. Most sites do make a distinction between graduates and completers and they have very specific criteria regarding what constitutes a graduate. However, there is no unifying national standard. Whatever the program decides, it is important to be firm about the requirements.

#### **COMMON EDUCATIONAL COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS**

1. Demonstrated academic improvement in reading, writing, and math.
2. Mastery of monthly or bimonthly academic competency requirements.
3. Mastery of monthly or bimonthly vocational/construction competency requirements.
4. Successful completion of job and/or college readiness competencies.
5. Successful completion of leadership development competencies.

6. Successful completion of individual educational objectives, such as high school credits or diploma, passing of sections or the entire GED, and/or passing of apprenticeship examination.
7. Demonstration of good work habits, attitude, and leadership skills in classroom and at the worksite, as indicated by positive evaluations.
8. Completion of exit examinations, if required.

### **CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR EARLY COMPLETERS OR REMEDIAL STUDENTS**

Establish guidelines and plan in advance for the educational development of students who complete early or enter the program with either high school diplomas or GEDs. Students with previous certificates may make up as many as 25% of the students. Ensure that they continue to participate and benefit in a meaningful way, or they may drop-out.

Be prepared to adapt individual student schedules. Example: Students who receive their GED early should be provided with appropriate advanced study during the GED preparation time, while still participating in regular program events. In addition, provide for adequate staff to give the extra assistance for 1) students who need remedial help during or after the program cycle, (2) students interested in college after their diplomas, and (3) students who need concentrated time to prepare for apprenticeship entrance exams.

### **AFTER STUDENTS LEAVE THE PROGRAM**

Ensure that all students, especially those who complete early and those who do not graduate during the cycle, have a way to stay connected to the program. After students leave the program, provide opportunities to participate in alumni meetings, support groups, job preparation classes, GED completion classes, and entrepreneurship classes.



## 4. Selecting and Managing the Youthbuild Team

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1. Role of Youthbuild Director
2. Job Descriptions
3. Academic Staff
4. Orientation and Training for Staff and Teachers
5. Helping Teachers Succeed
6. Monitoring and Evaluating Teaching Performance

*In the Youthbuild Team, every person on staff is a teacher and a counselor. Each person's role complements the other team members. Each person can make a significant impact on a Youthbuild student.*

### 4.1. ROLE OF THE YOUTHBUILD DIRECTOR

The director is responsible for implementing the vision, building the team, and managing the education program with a clear understanding of the goals, outcomes, and expectations of staff. In addition, the director:

- Has a working knowledge of the components of an effective education program
- Assists in the development of educational partnerships
- Participates in the design of the education component
- Hires high quality staff
- Identifies strong training programs to prepare and support education staff, and promotes ongoing professional development
- Holds staff accountable to the goals of the education program and evaluates whether they meet these goals
- Ensures coordination between academic and construction and leadership components
- Stays accessible and develops methods to receive feedback and input from students
- Identifies resources and funding to support and expand the education program

#### ***BUILDING A COHESIVE TEAM AND POSITIVE TONE***

Regardless of how expert and well-intentioned staff members or teachers are, they will not be able to function well unless the staff team as a whole is cohesive and cooperative among themselves and with the students. If any part of the program is chaotic, unfair, inconsistent, or poorly managed, or if other members of the staff are incompetent, uncooperative, or divisive, it will be difficult for the teachers and staff alike to do their jobs.

Thus, the overall responsibility of the director is to ensure accountability and commitment to the vision and program philosophy among all staff. When the positive mini-community is being created (what students tend to call a "family."), all members of the team will be able to work well within this context and the students will benefit.

## 4.2. JOB DESCRIPTIONS

*All staff, in addition to their particular skills, must have the ability to relate effectively to young people and to work closely with each other to plan the curriculum, evaluate student progress, and assess program achievements.*

### THE JOB OF PROGRAM MANAGER

- Facilitates the development of the educational and counseling components.
- Brings experience in teaching or educational management as well as experience in counseling.
- Demonstrates creativity, energy, and sensitivity to staff concerns.
- Possesses team-building skills and the ability to coordinate diverse educational and counseling activities.
- Facilitates communication between the counseling and academic staff.
- Assists the construction manager in facilitating communication between the academic and construction staff.
- Coordinates in-service training for teachers and counselors.
- Takes responsibility for contract management, the supervision of teachers and counselors, and the coordination of regular student performance reviews.

### THE JOB OF CONSTRUCTION MANAGER

- Coordinates and supervises the training component.
- Brings experience training and supervising young adults in construction-related skills.
- Assists the program manager in facilitating communication between the academic and construction staff.
- Possesses a clear idea about how to integrate classroom learning into what is learned at the construction site, or be willing to learn instructional skills.
- Communicates with the academic staff about the sequence of learning that will take place at the construction site. Example: If the foundation is being laid, the academic instructors can teach measurement, volume, and quantity of material necessary to lay the foundation. If construction is at a historical site, the teachers can provide lessons on the historical significance of the site and its importance to the community.

### THE JOB OF WORKSITE INSTRUCTORS, SITE SUPERVISORS, CONSTRUCTION TRAINERS

- Communicate with the academic instructors about how to synchronize classroom lessons and worksite instructions.
- Develop the learning schedule.
- Work directly with the academic teachers on how to deliver the identified lessons.
- Share lesson plans, learning modules, assessments, and materials with the academic instructors so that each lesson is reinforced in the classroom and at the worksite.
- Demonstrate skills, supervise students as they practice, review and reinforce lessons.
- Coordinate and assess the ongoing learning on the site.

- Test students' mastery of specific construction competencies.

## **JOB DESCRIPTION YOUTHBUILD VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR**

(To be adapted to local circumstances)

### **Central Responsibilities**

- Teach basic vocational education (primarily carpentry), while modifying the curriculum and materials as required to meet individual and program needs.
- Coordinate the planning and integration of curriculum training with basic skills and construction.
- Encourage the development of the trainees' personal and leadership skills.

### **Particular Responsibilities**

- Develop and coordinate a vocational (construction) curriculum and plans for implementation.
- In collaboration with the academic instructor and worksite instructors, provide vocational education classes that teach construction-related skills, including but not limited to demolition, framing, interior work, blueprint reading, safe procedures for use and handling of tools, and appropriate ways to handle technical construction problems that arise at the building site.
- Observe and evaluate trainees and provide hands-on assistance in training at the worksite.
- Coordinate testing and evaluation of student skills with the site trainers, and provide regular assessment of student performance.
- Document student skill attainment, in coordination with other instructors.
- Keep counselor and other staff informed about issues and needs of the trainees and participate in regular team reviews of student progress.
- Assist in informal personal and vocational counseling and development of trainee's leadership skills in collaboration with other Youthbuild staff.

### **Qualifications**

- Bachelor's degree in education or related field.
- Two years of experience teaching vocational education to adults or young adults.
- Experience in creative curriculum planning and development.
- A respect for the ideas and intelligence of young adults.
- Strong commitment to helping young people succeed in an innovative program to reorient their lives, nurture their leadership skills, and enable them to make a difference in their community.
- Ability to relate sensitively to multiracial and multicultural groups of young people.
- Excellent oral and written communications skills.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to team teach and work as part of team.

## **THE JOB OF COUNSELORS**

- Play a teaching role and are considered part of the educational team.

- Teach life skills, job readiness skills, and leadership skills.
- May give presentations on topics within their areas of expertise.
- May coordinate with the teachers to supplement academic classroom teaching with special classes and presentations.
- Arrange for guest speakers to talk to the students on relevant personal, health, and counseling issues.
- Run support groups.
- Run group counseling and one on one counseling.

## **JOB DESCRIPTION YOUTHBUILD ACADEMIC INSTRUCTORS**

(To be adapted to local circumstances)

### **Central Role of Academic Instructor**

To teach basic skills (reading, writing, and math) and GED or diploma preparation, modifying the curriculum and materials as required to meet individual and program needs. To coordinate, develop, or adapt a vocational-oriented curriculum in cooperation with the staff team.

### **Particular Responsibilities**

- Teach basic skills to students at varied academic levels integrating information from these areas: construction work, the racial/cultural heritages of trainees, and community history or issues. Academic levels can range from fourth grade to eighth grade reading levels.
- Develop learning contracts and individualized lesson plans for each trainee, assess trainee academic progress, and review and update plans regularly.
- Adapt curriculum and develop additional materials according to trainee and program needs.
- Modify and develop materials in conjunction with construction and counseling staff.
- Team-teach if appropriate.
- Participate in special projects as required.
- Attend staff meetings and trainings.
- Maintain up-to-date files according to program requirements.

### **Qualifications**

- Bachelor's degree in education or related field.
- Two years' experience in teaching basic skills, and GED preparation or high school, to adults or young adults, especially at-risk youth.
- Experience in creative curriculum planning and development.
- A respect for the ideas and intelligence of young adults.
- Strong commitment to helping young people succeed in an innovative training program to reorient their lives, nurture their leadership skills, and enable them to make a difference in their community.
- Ability to relate sensitively to multiracial and multicultural groups of young people.

- Excellent oral and written communication skills.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to team teach and work as part of a team.

### 4.3. FINDING, INTERVIEWING, AND HIRING STAFF AND TEACHERS

Program directors should make staff recruitment a priority from the outset. It is important to find staffs that have excellent credentials, practical experience, and who also have a natural affinity for the Youthbuild philosophy. Finding qualified staff to run the education component is not an easy task.

**In Youthbuild programs, all staff are teachers, just as all staff are counselors and leadership developers. Each staff person reinforces student self-confidence and builds skills relevant to other parts of the program.**

You can recruit teachers and staff from sources both traditional (school districts, community colleges, non-profit agencies, newspaper ads) and non-traditional (volunteer organizations, AmeriCorps, VISTA, and retired executive loan programs). However, if you want students to receive high school credit or community college credit, you will need to recruit teachers who possess a teaching certificate.

#### THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

1. Take plenty of time to interview and assess candidates.
2. Ask experts in the community to assist in identifying candidates, developing questions, and conducting the interviews. Examples: an instructor of the local trade school or a member of a carpentry apprenticeship program.
3. Look for flexibility, creativity, enthusiasm for alternative forms of learning, respect for young people, and skill in their area of expertise.
4. Educate candidates about the Youthbuild educational model and ask them to respond to it point by point, as to their relevant experience or reactions.
5. Ask candidates about their experiences with young people.
6. Give them scenarios to determine their ability to deal with typical problems.

### 4.4. THE ACADEMIC STAFF

You will be hiring two different types of teachers in the Youthbuild program:

1. One who teaches basic skills (reading, writing, and mathematics), if the students are primarily at a pre-GED level, or teaches the five subjects tested in the GED (reading, writing, math, science, and social studies), if the students are working toward the GED.
2. One who may work on a part-time basis teaching construction theory and practice coinciding with the building schedule. Ideally, one who offers not only the vocational instruction, but also other subjects that complement the strengths of the primary teacher.

#### CRITERIA FOR HIRING TEACHERS

- Knowledge of their role and skill area
- Experience in working with young people
- Deep respect for young people and their capacity for learning

- Willingness and experience with working as part of a team
- Creative, energetic, flexible, responsible, and open to supervision
- Experience with using adult education methodologies
- Willingness to learn new techniques and approaches
- Strong knowledge of how to facilitate learning, outside of the lecture format
- Understanding of different learning styles and which types of teaching methodologies are effective with different styles
- Basic understanding of different assessment instruments and how to use these instruments for instruction
- Interest/experience in team teaching or integrating subjects with other Youthbuild components
- Understanding of the community, the cultural backgrounds of the students, and a sense of the positive role that young leaders could play

## STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN INTERVIEWING POTENTIAL TEACHERS

At the interview stage, include Youthbuild students or a youth advisory committee if the program has not yet begun. Inclusion of young people in the process of hiring teachers can result in the selection of a stronger teaching staff and greater engagement of the students in the education component. In addition to questions, student participation can be very effective if you include role plays in the interviews. Students can present one or two typical scenarios for the candidate to handle. Often the greatest insight about the prospective teacher comes through these role plays. Listen to student recommendations, but remember that the hiring decision belongs to the Program Director.

## POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. What is your education philosophy?
2. How best can you teach young adults who have been out of school and unemployed?
3. Name different learning styles and how best to teach these styles.
4. How do you facilitate the learning process?
5. Do you have experience in individual learning plans?
6. What type of assessments do you use for young adults?
7. How do you manage tutors and other volunteers?
8. How would you integrate your classroom instruction with other Youthbuild components?

## SCENARIOS QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWING TEACHERS

**Example #1** You and another instructor plan to teach a group of 15 students how to hold an interview of a community member for a project they will be doing. They have never done it before and express some reluctance and shyness. (1) How you would organize the lesson(s)? (2) What methods you would use to teach and demonstrate the process to the students? (3) How you would assess the students and measure success in this assignment?

**Example #2** You have tested all of the students in reading skills and find that most of them read at the same level, but three students have particular difficulty with comprehension. You want to use an article with the whole group that you feel will be too difficult for these three students to

understand on their own. Explain how you would organize the class to fully involve all the students.

**Example #3** Two of the students who have come into the program already have their GEDs. They learn new skills quickly and perform their assignments well, then begin to play around when they are done. When you ask why they are not working, they say they are bored. Explain what you would do.

**Example #4** Give examples of when and how you might use each of the following teaching methods or tools in the classroom:

1. Large group learning
2. Small group learning
3. Individual learning
4. Peer tutoring
5. Newspapers
6. Computers
7. Journals
8. Community service
9. Silent reading
10. Career exploration
11. Speakers
12. Field trips

**Example #5** You have been asked to assess whether students are learning the mathematics competencies you have taught. You know by observing that six students have mastered the competencies you have taught this week, but you are not certain about the other nine. Explain how you would determine who has mastered the competencies and what you would do if some students have not achieved mastery.

**Example #6** You have been doing a variety of writing assignments in class over a period of a few months, and you decide it is time to determine who is ready to take the writing skills section of the GED Practice Test. Explain how you would assess students' writing skills and how you would make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

**Example #7** You gather students together to explain the purpose of the upcoming lesson and to give group and individual assignments. Most of the students are attentive and listening, but five of them are joking around, talking or sleeping. When you call on one of them, he says something sarcastic and continues to talk to his friend. Explain what you would do to get all of the students' attention.

**Example #8** You have given assignments to all of the students. For the first half of the morning, everyone is working well, but after the break some of the students do not get right to their assignments. They talk to each other, leaf through magazines and generally fool around. You encourage them to return to work. Two of them do so, but the others refuse. What do you do to get all of the students on task?

**Example #9** You want to engage students in the process of assisting in the development of a unit on health and safety. You want to have their input into the topics that should be covered as well as the materials and techniques you should use to teach the lessons. What strategies would you use to determine students' interests and to gather their ideas?

**Example #10** You have been asked to develop a unit with the unifying theme of “Working in the World.” Skills learning should take place, related to this theme, in the following areas: mathematics, reading and writing, leadership skills, job/college readiness skills, history, and GED preparation. Choose one of these and explain what skills you might focus on developing related to the overriding theme of working in the world.

**Example #11** You have been asked to work with construction site trainers and the construction manager to develop a unit related to construction. The regular academic disciplines would be taught in the service of a construction-related theme, such as safety or carpentry. Explain what process you think would be needed to make such collaboration possible, and what roles the various participants would play.

#### 4.5. ORIENTATION AND TRAINING FOR STAFF AND TEACHERS

Orientation for staff and teachers is equal in importance with the orientation for students. You are building a cohesive and committed team that must collaborate in their education roles far more than the average public school teacher. Here are some examples of components for an orientation for staff and teachers.

##### COMPONENTS OF YOUTHBUILD TEAM ORIENTATION

- Overview of Youthbuild’s national and local history and philosophy
- Overview of the organization’s history, goals, philosophy, and institutional relationships
- Importance of the Youthbuild Model (see below)
- The program’s approach and overall plan
- Respective roles of all staff, academic and non-academic

##### Special Orientation for Academic Staff

- Discussion of the academic goals of the program and their relationship to the teachers’ role.
- Expectations of students’ performance, competencies, and graduation requirements.
- Overview of the curriculum development and program planning process.
- Structure for team meetings, roles in the planning process, and scheduling issues.
- Mechanics of program operation, including documentation and paperwork.

##### EXPLAINING TO STAFF WHY THE YOUTHBUILD MODEL IS IMPORTANT

- Education is central to the Youthbuild program, and it takes place in many ways, with many people in and out of the program.
- The education program changes the way young people think about learning, since it is different from traditional schooling.
- Students discover that teachers actually care that they learn the material and stick with them until it is mastered.
- The students develop a cooperative culture of assisting each other, encouraged by the teacher.
- The program teaches them the importance of self-discipline, time management, study skills, and other behaviors and attitudes for successful learning.

- The program is the building block to their continuing education and provides avenues for certification, credentials, and other “pieces of paper” important to their future.
- Youthbuild teachers do not work alone. They are an integral part of the multifaceted program serving students on multiple levels.

*Adult education teachers typically have low prestige, low pay, and high turnover. The most important part of developing a good Youthbuild school is ensuring that good teachers want to stay. This means staff development, good working conditions, teacher visibility and community building in national and regional networks of Youthbuild teachers.*

## GIVE STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Provide resources for staff and teachers to participate in professional development associations, workshops, community college courses for teachers, and other opportunities. In addition, encourage teachers and education staff to attend professional development activities related to school-to-work for out-of-school youth and other types of alternative education training. (Youthbuild USA and HUD have training opportunities offered for teachers, tutors, and construction trainers.)

Many programs provide continuing education units for teachers wanting to increase their merit salary pay in local school districts.

## IDEAS FOR IN-SERVICE TRAINING

- Provide in-service training for teachers and staff, both to enhance successful performance and to remediate minor problems.
- Provide monthly in-service training on such issues as conflict resolution, classroom management techniques, critical thinking skills, and topics concerning multiculturalism, stereotypes, prejudice, respect, and diversity.
- Research resources in the community that can be helpful, such as a teacher trainer from the local board of education, resources from a union apprenticeship council, or people from a university education department who could meet with staff on a regular basis.
- Develop a mailing list and resource file of information about institutes, seminars, and training workshops for instructors offered by universities, educational organizations, HUD, and unions.
- Make these resource ideas available to teachers and staff.

## NETWORKING WITH OTHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Provide resources for teachers and staff to network with other program staff involved in high schools, adult schools, non-profit agencies, and community colleges working with the same population. Encouraging networking opportunities will enrich the Youthbuild teaching resources, including additional curricula, lesson plans, assessment models, and other educational materials.

*Ensure there is time for teachers and the education staff to meet with other educators and assess student progress. Educators need to talk to each other about teaching strategies and methodologies, especially for at-risk young people.*

## 4.6. HELPING TEACHERS SUCCEED

*Youthbuild directors should view the education component as an education system, not a collection of teaching modules. The entire educational system involves everyone who comes in contact with students, including non-academic staff and volunteer tutors. The system also includes the integration of construction, leadership development, job readiness, life skills, and community service with the other goals of the education program.*

### TEACHERS NEED PLANNING AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT TIME

To make the program effective, teachers need a large amount of time to coordinate and plan the program structure and curriculum before students are enrolled. You are not just hiring teachers to teach a subject, you are building a coordinated team. Here are some tips:

- Hire staff at least a month before start-up, if not two months.
- Teachers need time to (1) plan the classroom structure, (2) create a positive and pleasant learning environment, (3) conduct research and order materials, (4) develop curriculum guidelines and (5) join the team in developing a schedule and an integrated program, especially in understanding how to complement the construction component with their curriculum.
- Ensure that teachers have assessment tools prepared, learning contracts ready to use, a general plan for the year, and a specific plan for the first month.

*The need for planning time cannot be overstated. Teachers who do not have adequate time to plan instruction do one of two things: they either develop mediocre activities that do not require planning, research, or interesting materials, or they work on their own time to do this planning and "burn out." Either scenario is a loss.*

### SCHEDULING ONGOING PLANNING AND MEETING TIMES

Ensure teachers daily planning and evaluation times after the program begins. Schedule weekly meetings for teachers, trainers, and non-academic staff to share experiences, offer feedback, plan collaborations, and review student progress. Many programs suffer from not having provided time in the weekly routine for teachers to meet with other staff. Teachers feel frustrated, eking out time after work, or worse, not communicating at all. Students suffer if teachers do not have time to collaborate, inform each other of students' progress, or assist each other with suggestions.

*Include non-academic staff in meetings. They can have important observations of students' progress as they often interact daily with trainees.*

#### Teacher Involvement in Deciding Materials and Resources

Teachers should have a role in deciding what materials they will use. Allow teachers the opportunity (and budget) to order materials before students are enrolled and during the course of the year as needed. Provide adequate resources for a rich and diversified classroom to enable creative curriculum development in an alternative learning environment.

### BUDGET ITEMS

The education budget must include personnel, facilities, tools, materials (including computers), and resources for educational field trips (transportation and admissions). Budget for occasional "perks," such as party supplies, prizes, rewards, or certificates. Finally, include budget items for professional memberships and professional development opportunities for academic and non-academic staff.

## CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND SPACE

- Students and teachers need adequate space to accommodate the wide range of academic levels.
- Provide quiet classroom space and several rooms or spaces for small group activities and study.
- Check for good lighting and outlets for audio visual equipment.
- Teachers Are Part of a Larger Teaching Team

Teachers are part of the education component team, but it is very important to guard against the temptation to leave the education component only in the hands of the teachers. Isolating them in this way creates a sense of frustration and renders them less effective.

### 4.7. MONITORING TEACHER SUCCESS

#### A. WHY DO EVALUATIONS?

*Evaluations are for learning how to do things better. They are tools for being a lifelong learner.*

Regular assessments help directors, staff, and students to know if they are on track, and provide important information to plan for the future. Assessments can chart three types of Youthbuild progress: (1) Student progress, (2) Teaching effectiveness, and (3) Program effectiveness. Ways of evaluating student progress are described in the evaluation section of Part Two: Teaching in a Youthbuild Program. Students can also participate in evaluating teaching effectiveness and program impact.

For Youthbuild directors and staff, there are four reasons to collect information: (1) Information for a funder, (2) Information to improve program operations, (3) Information for the Board of Directors, and (4) Information to improve the curriculum.

Before you start an evaluation process, you need to be clear on the reasons and methods for the assessment, and share that information with the staff.

#### **COMMUNICATE TO EVERYONE INVOLVED:**

Exactly what is being evaluated

Why the evaluation is being conducted

What will be done with the information

#### **WHAT YOU NEED FOR AN INDIVIDUAL OR PROGRAM EVALUATION**

1. The Purpose
2. Who Needs the Information
3. How They Will Use the Information
4. Decisions That Might be Made on the Basis of the Evaluation
5. How Data Will be Collected
6. Who Participates in Collecting and Analyzing Data
7. How Information Will be Documented and Communicated
8. Who Will Receive the Results
9. What Will Happen to Lessons Learned

## B. SETTING UP THE SYSTEM

Once these framing questions have been identified, you need to clearly state the purpose of the evaluation and the indicators that can measure progress or success. This process is best done in a collaborative manner, so that “evaluation” means a learning process for everyone, not a punitive process.

Early in the program, it is crucial to instill in both staff and trainees a willingness to participate in formal and informal assessments. In a supportive team environment, staff and trainees can learn to welcome feedback on their own performance and work together to improve the entire program.

To determine the purpose of an evaluation, first decide who or what will be evaluated and how that information will be used. Is the data needed to satisfy a funder? Will the data be used to improve program operation? Has the Board requested the information to make organizational decisions? Is the evaluation data needed for instructional purposes for use with trainees? Do teachers need feedback in order to improve teaching techniques? Can an evaluation procedure be used that will satisfy the needs of these various stakeholders? The purpose of the evaluation will determine whether a formative approach will be used to generate ongoing feedback or whether a summative approach will be used to gather final outcome or impact data.

For a cohesive education program, usually the program manager or education director oversees and coordinates the education and training components. However, the manager responsible for supervising staff may not have adequate experience in all areas of supervision. Some Youthbuild programs hire evaluation consultants or other agencies for advice and assistance. This type of evaluation can provide objective feedback and may carry a degree of credibility important to funders and other program partners. You can also solicit help from the local college or university, and recruit experts from the community to provide in-service training workshops on a regular basis.

If qualified, the manager responsible for supervising teaching staff may participate in and advise on continual curriculum development, planning, staff collaboration, and establishing regular methods of supervising staff, and assisting education and training staff.

## C. EXPLAIN THE EVALUATION PROCESS DURING INITIAL HIRING

Expectations of Teaching Performance

Probationary Period for All New Teachers

During the initial hiring, let teachers know that there is a method for ongoing evaluation. To create trust and open communication, let them know that these are learning tools as well as evaluations. The approaches adopted will be used to help teachers and to work through problems with them in the interest of building a better program together.

Begin during the hiring process, preferably during the initial interview, by informing potential teachers of their specific duties. Review the expected compliance requirements with philosophy of teaching and teamwork. Discuss the program’s plan for teacher supervision and evaluation and show them the evaluation criteria during the interview and orientation.

### *EXPECTATIONS FOR TEACHER PERFORMANCE*

Make these expectations clear to teachers at the beginning of their employment:

- Students will be assessed, usually every two months, on specific components.
- Weekly student evaluations are expected.
- Individual learning plans will be developed for each student.
- Teachers will use a wide variety of educational resources to meet student needs.

- Teachers will recognize the different learning styles of students.
- Teachers will utilize different instructional methodologies.
- Teachers will be held accountable for GED, high school diploma, and literacy objectives set between the student and teacher.

### ***PROBATION PERIOD FOR ALL NEW TEACHERS***

Set a probationary period, usually three months, to give teachers a chance to work out the kinks and feel comfortable, but short enough to avoid disruption of the program if the teacher must be let go.

Let teachers know that there will be a formal evaluation of their work after the probationary period is over. During the course of the probationary period, meet regularly (perhaps weekly) with the teacher and provide an honest appraisal of his or her performance and suggestions for improvement. Document the meetings. If, at the end of three months, a program director believes that the person is not suitable there will have been enough communication about the problems that the teacher or staff member will not be surprised.

Here is a form, developed by a Youthbuild program, to document progress at the end of the probation period. There are other evaluation forms on teaching and student performance in PART TWO: TEACHING IN A YOUTHBUILD PROGRAM, Evaluation section.



Sample “End of Probation” Form — see Appendix 12, Chapter 4

## **D. MONITORING METHODS AND TIPS**

### ***WEEKLY OR BIWEEKLY TEACHER MEETINGS***

- Monitoring Lesson Planning and Recordkeeping
- Intervene Immediately When Problems Arise
- Document Teacher Performance Issues
- Regular Observation Is Important
- Teach Self-Assessment Skills
- Student Feedback and Putting It in Perspective
- Regular Quarterly Evaluations of Teachers

#### ***(1) WEEKLY OR BIWEEKLY TEACHER MEETINGS***

Mandatory regular teachers’ meetings (at least two hours in length) are a way to supervise and assess teachers. However, remind teachers that the entire team is learning as well as teaching, and encourage supportive and constructive feedback of each other. Structure the meetings so that teachers provide specific information about their work. For example, have a different topic for each week of the month and ask teachers to be prepared to discuss them during the weekly meetings. Consider the following ideas:

Monthly Plans: Teachers discuss in detail their goals for the month in terms of specific learning objectives, specific planned activities, methods to assess student improvement, and ways they can coordinate efforts or team-teach.

Methodology: (1) Teachers discuss successful and unsuccessful teaching methods, (2) do brief presentations on alternative approaches they have used, (3) discuss articles on non-traditional strategies, or (4) hear invited speakers on new methodologies. Encourage supportive and constructive critical feedback.

Student Progress: Teachers share their student folders, Individual Learning Plans, daily site plans or evaluations and discuss how individual students are progressing, obstacles to overcome, and methods for enhancing student involvement.

Evaluation of the Previous Month: Refer to the specific learning goals and objectives outlined in Monthly Plans and discuss as a group what worked or did not work, and how best to proceed in the future.

Other Possible Topics: Classroom management, relationships with students and among students, setting a tone in the classroom, motivating and gaining the trust of students, and handling specific difficult situations and students.

### ***(2) MONITOR TEACHERS' LESSON PLANNING AND RECORDKEEPING***

Ensure that teachers are doing adequate planning and recording their lesson plans for future reference. Teachers can use a standard lesson plan format or a variation of their own.

These reports will be helpful in gathering documentation of the curriculum as it develops and have reference information about teacher performance. Collect the lesson plans in a designated place and review them regularly. When the time comes for formal evaluations, the program director will be well acquainted with the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers' lesson planning.

### ***(3) INTERVENE IMMEDIATELY WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE***

Always react immediately when major problems arise, such as it becomes clear that a teacher is not fulfilling his or her duties, or working cooperatively with others, or relating well with students. This immediate response is important so that the teacher does not get the idea that his or her performance is acceptable just because it has never been challenged.

- Address the issue head-on and recommend changes.
- Put together a remediation plan that includes outside training or work with a consultant, if it is believed that the problem relates to lack of experience and training.
- If necessary, review the philosophy outlined in the beginning and the notes from previous meetings and evaluations.
- Document the meeting and the discussion.

### ***(4) DOCUMENT TEACHER PERFORMANCE ISSUES***

Keep records of positive and negative teacher behavior for reference during evaluations or personnel actions. Examples: Lateness with detailed list of dates and times. If a teacher has been consistently reprimanded for not cooperating with the team, there will be documentation of each discussion and recommendation.

### ***(5) REGULAR OBSERVATION IS IMPORTANT***

One of the most important ways to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers is to observe them formally and informally on a regular basis. Drop in frequently and "help out" for a few minutes so that teachers are comfortable and familiar with the procedure. Sit and observe a full lesson occasionally (perhaps once a week during the probationary period, then once a month after that).

After the observation, follow up immediately if possible, giving as much honest positive feedback as possible and suggestions for improvement. Ask questions to clarify aspects of the lesson or strategy that were not understood, and brainstorm together what things the teacher might do differently in the future.

*If teachers are regularly observed from the beginning and see classroom visits as a way to facilitate overall program improvement, the observations will feel less threatening and may even be welcome.*

***(6) TEACHER SELF-ASSESSMENTS***

Just like the students, the teachers can assess their own performance informally in weekly meetings with their colleagues and with their supervisor in formal performance evaluations.

This approach provides a good model for lifelong learning. This demonstrates to students that everyone is both a learner and a teacher.

***(7) STUDENT FEEDBACK AND PUTTING IT INTO PERSPECTIVE***

It is important to involve students in evaluating teaching performance and the program to increase their sense of participation and ownership of the program. Forms are also provided in Part Two: Teaching in a Youthbuild Program, Evaluation section. However, keep in mind that student feedback can be influenced by general feelings about school and should be used as a springboard for discussion, not as a sole criterion for evaluating teachers or the program. In programs with experiential methodologies and close-knit group work, one cycle of students may focus on one teacher in a negative way and, in the next program cycle, the student criticism might involve a totally different teacher. Because learning to take responsibility for your own learning is frequently an uncomfortable process, such a reaction is common with this type of methodology. Consequently, such criticism of particular teachers should be taken as part of the learning process and put in context. Sometimes the teacher who has made the student most uncomfortable is the one who engenders the greatest learning in the long run.

***(8) REGULAR QUARTERLY EVALUATIONS OF TEACHERS***

During regular quarterly evaluations, talk to teachers about their roles as learners – learning about their teaching process -- just as the students are also learners and teachers. This is what makes a learning community. Be sure to offer concrete recommendations for change. Finally, keep records of the discussions at these meetings for reference at subsequent meetings and evaluations.

There are two evaluation forms that can be used or you can combine the two to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Samples appear in the following section. You can add a numerical scale or write out comments. Share these evaluation summaries with the teachers and give them an opportunity to respond or provide their own written comments.

**E. ASSESSMENT FORMS — SEE APPENDIX 12, CHAPTER 4**

- #1 Teacher Performance Checklist for 3-Month Evaluations
- #2 Overall Teacher Performance Evaluation
- #3 Student Evaluation of Teachers

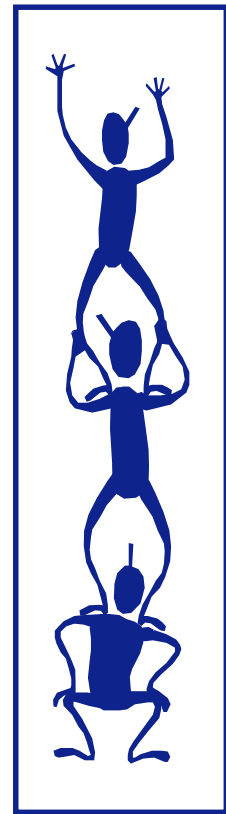
**F. PROGRAM EVALUATION FORMS — SEE APPENDIX 12, CHAPTER 4**

- #1 Sample Questions: Student Evaluation of Education Components
- #2 Sample Questions: Teachers' Evaluation of Education Program



# PART 2

## TEACHING IN A YOUTHBUILD PROGRAM





## 5. Organizing the Education Component

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1. Classroom Materials
2. Recommended Classroom Materials
3. The Weekly Classroom Schedule
4. Initial Student Interview
5. Lesson Plans and Lesson Evaluations

### 5.1. Classroom Materials

Teachers need to set the tone for learning from the first day: cooperation, creativity, fun, and practical applications. The visual quality of the classroom environment, including wall decoration or room arrangements, can seem unimportant, but it creates an atmosphere that says to students that this is a different kind of educational program. The way that staff organizes the space, utilize the materials, and plan the schedule should all be designed to generate enthusiasm and to facilitate learning, responsibility, and respect. Think about times and spaces to accommodate activities for the large group, small group activities, and silent, individual work.

*Take time before students arrive to create an ordered, accessible, disciplined learning environment. The classroom can communicate very powerful messages about the program's respect for students and expectations about their abilities.*

### 5.2. Recommended Classroom Materials

- Tables for group work, group discussions and projects
- File cabinets for storing and organizing student work
- File folders
- Multiple computers or access to computers
- A variety of high quality computer software for word processing, education games, reference, GED skill practice
- Typewriters
- Globes, maps of city, state, United States, and world
- Colored paper, glue, scissors, tape, poster board, magazines for clipping
- Lined paper, blank paper, graph paper, notebooks
- Colored pens, colored pencils
- Library of high quality reference books (atlases, dictionaries, thesauruses, carpentry/construction manuals, and career references)
- Library of books for silent individual reading (novels, biographies, self-help books, histories, sports books, mysteries, "classic comics," student and writing collections)
- Library of high quality skill workbooks, GED and pre-GED textbooks
- Picture file to stimulate writing
- Writing box of ideas to stimulate writing

- Subscriptions to local newspapers
- Bulletin boards
- Inspirational quotes
- Video camera and TV/VCR
- Cassette tape recorder
- Assorted educational board games and card games

### 5.3. THE WEEKLY CLASSROOM SCHEDULE

*"We do vocational education on the site two mornings a week. We are in a room in a garage that is set up like a classroom. It has a desk, tables and a blackboard. We focus on what they are doing on-site that week. It is also a time for me to touch base with the crew chiefs and see how they are doing. I also teach vocational education in the classroom two sessions a week. We have a good blackboard, textbooks, and a VCR. We combine reading and writing, vocabulary development, demonstration, and hands-on practice. The modules in class include safety, tool identification, electrical, and blueprints. I'm also planning to deal with the history of construction careers, barriers to employment for women, real estate, financing, and community development, because these topics make construction come alive, students can see the relevance of it."*

-Rebecca Etchison, Youthbuild Dayton

There is never enough time to include all the creative activities that teachers develop, so choose carefully in deciding priority activities that best serve the needs of the particular student group. Other program activities normally take place at the same time as academic sessions, so coordination with other Youthbuild staff is critical to avoid disruptions. Here are some options with suggested times for a weekly schedule:

**For teachers only:** Weekly general staff meetings and planning sessions to share experiences, give and receive feedback, and plan collaborative activities.

Silent Reading & Follow Up: Daily Reading with Weekly "Book Talk" Session

Plan a brief period of time each day for students to read silently from novels or non-fiction books of their choice. This set-aside time makes a strong statement about the value of reading. If you do not have a variety of high-interest, multi-level books on site, set aside time weekly to visit the local library and get the advice of a librarian about books especially appealing to young adults. After the reading time, you can ask students to write a brief summary or reactions to the books, or have them present an oral or written report in a regular, 30-minute "book talk" session.

Journal Writing: 15 Minutes Daily

Setting a regular, 15-minute time for journal writing helps develop writing skills, encourages reflection and introspection, and engenders communication if students elect to share their journal entries. They can write about personal feelings or focus on classroom and site issues.

Construction-related Math: 6 Hours per Week

Set aside regular time to practice math skills in a construction-related context in large group, small group, and individual activities. Encourage hands-on involvement and practice.

**Cultural History: 4 Hours Weekly**

Set aside time to teach reading and writing skills in the context of cultural history. (See many resources in the Appendix.) Use materials to develop an understanding of their own and each other's culture and history. Set aside 2 hours at a time for in-depth work.

**Individual Study Time: 1 Hour Daily**

Schedule time for quiet study and completion of Individual Learning Plans with individual teacher, tutor, or peer. Students develop independent learning habits if they are expected to work seriously and alone for a portion of each day.

**Flexible Time: 1 Block of Time Weekly**

Set aside times for speakers, field trips, recreation activities, parties, and recognition ceremonies.

**Vocational Education: 6 Hours Weekly (2 - 3 Hour Blocks)**

Reinforce the worksite skills with opportunities to integrate reading, writing, and math skills with construction learning, such as practicing skills in a relaxed setting, learning construction theory, and discussing construction-related issues. (See Appendix for vocational education tools.)

**GED Preparation Time: 1 - 2 Hours Daily**

For GED students, set a regular time daily for students to practice the specific skills for the GED Test. Assign pre-GED or GED workbook activities (usually 1 - 2 hours for teachers to help students individually).

**Job and College Readiness Skills: 3 - 4 Hours Weekly (1 - 2 Hour Blocks)**

With the help of the counselor, schedule time for job and college readiness skills, including in-depth exploration of work-related issues and practice of work-related reading, writing, and speaking skills. This will set clearer measurements of how well a student will achieve later.

**Leadership Skill: 2 Hours Weekly (1 - 2 Hour Blocks)**

Though leadership skills will be integrated throughout the program, schedule time for developing specific reading, writing, and speaking skills necessary for making decisions, working in groups, contributing to policy discussions, and discussing and analyzing complex social issues. Highlight how speaking, listening, problem-solving, and writing skills contribute to leadership qualities. The vocational teacher should emphasize teamwork skills. These sessions can complement field trips or outside speakers.

**Community Meeting: 1 Hour Weekly**

Provide time for all students and staff to share concerns, discuss upcoming events, and hear reports from various student leadership committees. Community meetings establish camaraderie among students and staff, and give students time to practice leadership and listening skills.

**Support Groups: 1 Hour Weekly**

Some programs set aside time each week for support groups. This should be a time that is comfortable and accessible to all. Fridays may be best if all of the students are together (perhaps following the community meeting).

**Life Skills/Counseling Groups: No Set Time**

Some programs integrate important life skills discussions, such as moving out, getting an apartment, car, food activities with job readiness, support groups, or leadership skills.

#### Counseling: Weekly Meetings with Counselors

Counselors meet with students regularly, usually during school time. Coordinate times for both the academic and counseling components. If possible, schedule counseling appointments for the same time each week, for example, during individual work time. Counseling sessions should be with the individual and in groups. Take time to visit the worksite to observe the student.

#### Community Service: 1 Afternoon Weekly

In addition to building affordable housing, Youthbuild provides time for students to “give back” to the community and to increase the community’s respect for the students. Often working with AmeriCorps programs, students can tutor children, talk to middle school students about the importance of staying in school, help senior citizens, serve food to homeless people, and other service activities. This time helps students learn about community issues and career possibilities beyond construction. Allow time for transportation and classroom reflection on the experience.

### 5.4. INITIAL STUDENT INTERVIEW

Teachers may be involved in the initial interviews of potential students. The following list provides some questions to guide the interview. Teachers should take notes and keep this form in the student file. Another Academic History Interview Form can be found in the Appendix.

#### *SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO ASSESS ACADEMIC INTEREST*

- What did you like and dislike about school?
- Why did you leave school? Why do you want to return to school?
- What would have made your school experience better?
- How are you different as a student now than you were when you were in school?
- What impact do you think education will have on your future?
- What would you want teachers to know about you as a student?
- What subjects do you look forward to studying?
- Do you read books? Newspapers? Magazines?
- Tell me about your study habits. How do you feel about homework?
- How do you feel about reading? Writing? Doing math? Learning vocational skills in the classroom? Working independently? Working in groups?
- How do you feel about coming on time and coming every day?
- Did you ever have a really good teacher? What was he or she like?
- What is your proudest or happiest memory of school? What is your worst memory of school?
- Explain the nature of the academic environment and ask candidates what they think they might dislike and like about it and what might be easy or hard.
- What advice would you give someone who had dropped out of school?

### 5.5. FORMS FOR LESSON PLANS & LESSON EVALUATIONS

The following forms can be used by teachers in outlining the lessons and then evaluating its effectiveness. All this information will be valuable for the program to guide future curriculum development.



Sample Form: Teachers' Lesson Plan see Appendix 12, Chapter 5



Sample Form: Teacher's Evaluation of Lesson See Appendix 12, Chapter 5

## 6. Curriculum Development

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1. Four Models of Curriculum Design
2. Special Program Components

This chapter assumes that teachers will develop much of their own curriculum. However, you should continue to seek new material being developed by various colleges and educational firms.

Youthbuild USA also can provide many models and materials.

In selecting curriculum, keep the following criteria in mind:

- Use culturally relevant to the life experiences and issues important to the students
- Can be adapted to directly complement learning in other parts of the program
- Should be accessible, easy to use, self-contained, breaks down specific units of instruction, and has companion student materials.
- Should provide pre- and post assessments of knowledge and/or skills.

This includes methods that support facilitation of learning process, not directive teaching or lectures, which are not often effective with Youthbuild students. Ideas: alternative instructional methodologies, such as small groups, individual learning, use of tutors, audiovisual equipment, and project-based learning.

### 6.1. FOUR MODELS OF CURRICULUM DESIGN

Here are four options, and each can be used with either the GED or high school diploma certificate models. You can also combine parts of each option.

1. Interdisciplinary Theme Model (with project-based or service learning)
2. Academic-vocational integration model (school-to-work, work learning)
3. Competency-based Model
4. Computer-based Model

#### A. INTERDISCIPLINARY THEME MODEL (WITH PROJECT-BASED OR SERVICE LEARNING)

Reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of students' lives, this theme model can focus on topics and skills that are interesting to students and relevant to their life experiences. Skills can be taught in ways that cut across subject areas. Usually taught in two-month units, sample outlines appear at the end of this chapter, including housing, construction, leadership, and community themes. Other sample curricula are available through Youthbuild USA. When selecting themes, involve students whenever possible in brainstorming topics, such as the options below:

1. The local community
2. History/culture of people in the community
3. Housing
4. Work and working
5. Careers

6. Who I am: finding personal identity
7. Male-female relationships
8. Wealth and power
9. Expressing yourself: the arts
10. Health and safety
11. Family and parenting

See the Appendix for three examples of theme-based curricula: The Local Community, Housing, and Careers in Construction. These themes can be used with either project-based learning or service learning, which allow the students to direct their own learning, thereby increasing motivation, give practical application of knowledge and skills, and create opportunities for developing team skills, which include taking responsibility and demonstrating leadership. In theme and project-based models, students examine issues from a variety of perspectives, but create a tangible product at the end of the unit.

The project-based learning approach integrates academic skills with leadership activities. Select five to seven students to form small groups to address a part of the task. Project example: Analyze and report on a proposed community development project; include people involved, historical issues, community residents' views, economics behind the plan, and how the community development project will impact the environment (not only physical environment). The groups might then present their findings to the city planning department or city council. Thus, the students are involved in a leadership development activity and are using important academic, group dynamic, personal, and institutional dynamic skills that are necessary for effective leadership.

A service-learning approach might focus on neighborhood improvement and involvement, contact with the people, property, history, and issues of the neighborhood. Projects should be geared toward the city, or rural environment in which the students live. Using the idea of "giving of one's self," service learning can build leadership skills, self awareness, critical thinking, team skills, mentoring, and communication skills while, at the same time, increasing academic skills in math, language arts, social sciences, and the trades. Project example: Constructing wheelchair ramps for a local elementary school, including working with school staff and students and practicing construction design, budgeting, report writing, negotiation, and landscaping.

#### *STEPS IN DEVELOPING A THEME-BASED CURRICULUM*

1. **Decide on Units:** One or two month units that give students a sense of completion.
2. **Select Theme and Project-based or Service-Learning Approach:** Involve students whenever possible to brainstorm themes that are interesting and relevant to their life experiences.
3. **Determine Objectives:** Select skills and knowledge on the topic and describe what the student should be able to do after completing the unit.
4. **Brainstorm Activities:** Brainstorm activities that will be fun, innovative and relate to the skills and knowledge identified in the objectives and the program objectives.
5. **List Skill Sets:** List the skills under the objectives in greater detail according to the program components: Silent Individual Reading, GED Preparation, Construction-related Math, Cultural History, Vocational Education and Worksite, Leadership, Job/College Readiness, and Individual Study.
6. **Develop Culminating Project Ideas:** As a group, brainstorm a series of on-going projects that students can do individually or in small groups to demonstrate achievement of the unit objectives. Projects can be presented at the end of the unit for

a sense of mastery and completion. For more information, see the next major section on Special Components of the Youthbuild program. Culminating projects are an excellent way to assess student skill acquisition. See the sections on “Alternative Evaluation Tools,” “Projects,” and “Portfolios” in Chapter Eleven for suggestions.

### ***WORKING COLLABORATIVELY ON THE INTERDISCIPLINARY THEME CURRICULUM***

Together with other program staff members—academic teachers, vocational education instructors, and site staff—you can create a theme-based curriculum that integrates academic, construction, leadership, and job readiness skills. Adequate planning time is critical. The team must meet regularly to plan unit content and collaborative activities. Some questions to ask:

- What overall themes are most important to our students?
- What overall themes best integrate all of the disciplines?
- How will the connection be made between the site, classroom, job readiness competencies, and leadership components?
- When will academic teachers meet with the construction site staff, vocational education teachers, and counselors to collaborate?
- Who will teach what?
- How much time will be spent team teaching?



Theme-based Interdisciplinary Curriculum Worksheet See Appendix 12, Chapter 6

## **B. ACADEMIC-VOCATIONAL INTEGRATION MODEL**

(School-to-Work or Work-learning Approaches)

The work-based learning approach is modeled after the traditional apprenticeship concept; integrating theoretical instruction with structured on-the-job training in real, relevant, and concrete ways. One option is to split students into two groups, half in school, while the other half is on the work-site. Construction-related content makes up much of the material in social studies, math, and English. Academic skills taught in the classroom reinforce and expand skills taught on the site. Likewise, on the worksite, academic skills are reinforced through their practical application to site work. The synergy results in high student interest and excellent preparation for high-wage, high-skill careers.

### ***WORKING COLLABORATIVELY ON THE INTEGRATED ACADEMIC/VOCATIONAL CURRICULUM***

Many Youthbuild programs choose the School-to-Work model, but it requires regular collaboration of academic and vocational staff. Consider these curriculum planning decisions:

- Location of instruction for different skill and knowledge learning
- Who will teach each knowledge or skill component
- How to maximize the connection between worksite construction training and classroom instruction
- Times for worksite instructors, academic instructors, and vocational instructors to plan, coordinate instruction, and debrief
- Time spent in team and individual teaching

### THREE APPROACHES FOR STAFF COLLABORATION

1. **Support Approach:** Staff works and teaches separately, but ensure that they are supporting each other. They learn about each other's areas of expertise through regular meetings designed to update staff members and coordinate their efforts.
2. **Content Exchange Approach:** Academic teachers use vocationally relevant materials to teach their subject vocational education. Worksite instructors reinforce the academic skills content of the trades. Examples: Students learn dictionary skills by learning words related to construction. Students frame a wall on the construction site and then describe the process in writing. Vocational instructors suggest reading and writing subjects. Academic teachers suggest materials and methods for teaching measurement skills on the worksite.
3. **Teaming and Location Exchanges:** Staff all work together to choose lessons, develop instructional materials, present material, and assess student progress. In this highly cooperative approach, instructors demonstrate to students, ways in which their respective fields are related. The academic teacher might go to the worksite to teach math skills for the next phase of the project, or reading skills for understanding directions for operating a power saw. Likewise, after a worksite demonstration, worksite and vocational instructors could go to the classroom to review terms for framing a wall or the names of tools used.

### C. COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM MODEL

This model is structured around a core of measurable learning objectives that define the outcomes of instruction, but not the means, methodology, or the materials. It uses specific, measurable, and pre-determined learning benchmarks that clearly gauge progress in skills and knowledge. Benchmarks can be outlined on competency checklists that may include academic skills, job readiness skills, life skills, and leadership skills.

You can find sample competencies in the Youthbuild companion volumes to this handbook: *Construction Training at a Youthbuild Program* and *Leadership Development at a Youthbuild Program*.

*With input from private industry, the Department of Labor also has a set of competencies called SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills), which are frequently used by job training professionals. These core competencies include the ability to (1) allocate resources, (2) work with others, (3) use information, (4) understand systems, and (5) use technology.*

*The SCANS 2000 initiative, now an interdisciplinary group at John Hopkins University's Institute for Policy Studies, has developed work-based core competencies and teacher training materials on CD-ROMs.*

There is no national set of agreed-upon academic competencies for secondary education beyond the GED examination. Youthbuild competencies should be determined for each unit and communicated to students at the outset. Some factors to consider in curriculum design:

**Short-Term Skill Objectives:** Specific skills expected at the end of each learning unit; clear statement of what students will be able to do, and how these skills will be assessed.

**Teaching Strategies:** Strategies and methods to teach and reinforce the education objectives.

**Evaluation and Documentation:** Method for determining when and if educational objectives have been achieved, and ways to document ongoing evaluation.

### ***CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM***

- Allows for highly individualized learning, with each student progressing at his or her own rate.
- Accommodates students with a variety of achievement levels and a wide range of academic needs.
- Offers teachers opportunities for creativity and innovative approaches to teaching.
- Motivates students by giving them clear, frequent, and easily attained daily or weekly benchmarks.
- Students always know which objectives they are working to achieve.
- Students will not fail because they can have all the time necessary to master each objective.
- Some competency-based GED curricula allow students to test out of competencies they have already acquired before instruction is offered.
- Help programs measure their success, by documenting each student's progress through a curriculum.
- The data can yield, for an established time period, the total number of competencies achieved, average number of competencies achieved per student, and the average length of time for students to achieve a given competency.
- Especially valuable for documenting the progress of students who do not complete the program.
- Requires extensive collaboration and design time at the beginning.

### **D. COMPUTER-BASED CURRICULUM MODEL**

The computer-based curriculum model has been adopted by a number of Youthbuild programs because it is interactive, efficient, and helps students develop important computer skills. It allows programs to use advanced technology to provide competency-based instruction. Planning for student placement in a competency-based computer program is directly related to the initial assessment.

*"I learned how to use computers. They even had a section on how to go look for a job, how to interview, how to put together a resume, how to dress, and how to speak. At the beginning people were like, 'why should I work for my money when I could just sell drugs,' but by the end everyone had their resume together and was looking for jobs. I was so proud of everyone; their whole attitude changed. You noticed that people who were saying it was boring at first stayed to the very end."*

—Nzinga Mahon, graduate, Youth Action Youthbuild

### ***CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPUTER-BASED MODEL***

- May be elected because of access to extensive technology or plan to work closely with a collaborating agency that uses this approach
- Review and assessment are provided by a computer program
- Must be managed by a computer-literate administrator or teacher
- Individually-paced curriculum, accommodating students of different levels

- Most successful when integrated with other essential teaching strategies, including large and small group teaching, tutoring, hands-on skill practice, and theme-based projects
- A portion of the day or week is set aside for individually-paced computer practice, supplemented with teacher assistance and peer tutoring
- Must ensure that the computer-based approach will be only one element of a multi-dimensional instructional approach
- Should hold an appropriate place in overall academic curriculum, but should not be the sole source of instruction
- Needs to be evaluated on an ongoing basis
- Essential that computer programs remain flexible
- Requires records of what have been developed and periodic changes so that the program can learn from mistakes and successes

*“Be careful to balance the use of technology, personal interaction and traditional group teaching. Computers are a good resource, but it is possible to become too dependent on them.”*

-Joyce Howard, Youthbuild Tallahassee

## 6.2. SPECIAL COMPONENTS OF THE CURRICULUM

1. Individual Learning Plans
2. Student Education File
3. Culminating Projects
4. Field Trips
5. Community Education
6. Inviting Guest Speakers
7. Leadership Development as a Program Thread

### A. INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS

An individual learning plan, also known as an individual education plan (IEP), is used by the teacher to provide the following for each student:

- A record of present academic level in reading and mathematics
- Short-term classroom objectives needed by the student to achieve proficiency in reading and academics
- Academic assessment to determine if the student has mastered these
- Objectives
- Documentation of assessment results

In an individual learning plan, you can outline both individual and group learning expectations, so that both you and the students know what needs to be accomplished in a predetermined period of time. Learning plans are an excellent way to document student achievement, assess student progress, and help students feel a sense of completion and mastery. After the

preliminary testing of students, you will have a fairly detailed picture of each student's skills and areas of need. Using the competency checklist as a guide, work with students to identify the specific skills that individuals need to improve. The individual learning plan should outline the specific activities. Time needs to be scheduled daily for independent study or working with teachers and tutors on specific assignments.

### ***INVOLVE STUDENTS IN THEIR LEARNING PLANS***

Students should be closely involved in the development of their individual learning plans. This involvement will increase their motivation and feeling of responsibility for their own learning; a critical lifelong skill in Youthbuild. Together you can work on the list of skills, on their competency checklists, and help them get familiar with requirements for successful program completion, including the skills tested on certificate exams. To increase their motivation, give them opportunities to choose materials and activities that interest them and then be involved in assessment of their own progress. Review with students the results of quizzes and have them check their own work against checklists. Ask them for recommendations for activities for the next unit.

### ***PLAN INDIVIDUAL LEARNING IN A GROUP CONTEXT***

Each student can work on individual learning activities at an appropriate level, while completing the group activities. For example: If the whole group is working on a reading concept by reading a short story together, then each student can work on a complementary activity during individual study time at her/his own pace.



Sample Individual Learning Plan: See Appendix 12, Chapter 6

## **B. STUDENT EDUCATION FILES**

Each student should have an education file that begins with the initial interviews before admission. Teachers should refer to the material frequently to adjust curriculum and measure progress.



Student Education Files: Checklist of Contents See Appendix 12, Chapter 6

## **C. CULMINATING PROJECTS**

Culminating projects at the end of each unit help draw together the learning and help to assess students' progress. Students can plan their time so that they work on the project throughout the unit, incorporating skills learned into a presentation, display, or research paper that represents their learning. If students work in a group on a project, they need to have specific assignments and ways to evaluate each person's contributions.

Students can also opt to do independent study projects during the unit, an option especially appropriate for students with GEDs or diplomas. These projects become important performance indicators in assessments of both students and of the entire education component. The following forms can be adapted to the Individual Culminating Project and/or the Independent Study Project:



Sample Form: Individual Culminating Project: See Appendix 12, Chapter 6

Independent Study Contract: See Appendix 12, Chapter 6

Materials to be used: See Appendix 12, Chapter 6

## EVALUATING PROJECTS

Projects give students the opportunity to demonstrate acquisition of skills learned over time, while focusing on the students' areas of interest related to the themes studied. Projects give students the opportunity to make choices. If a program wants to test understanding of concepts, students can choose related topics. If a program wants to test knowledge of a specific topic, students can choose methods for demonstrating that knowledge.

When using projects as an assessment tool, develop clear and specific project guidelines, such as:

- The final product must include math, reading, and writing skills related to the content.
- The student must use more than one source of information – e.g., interviews, research, observation, experience.
- The final product must include a detailed outline of the product plan.
- The project must have a title page, including name of the project, student's name, and date.
- The project must be completely and correctly finished.
- The project must be neatly finished (all writing, drawing, and gluing must be neatly and carefully presented).
- The final product must be presented in a pocket folder or plastic binder.

## D. FIELD TRIPS

Students and teachers often welcome field trips as a break from the classroom. Organizing a field trip can be as educational for students as the field trip itself.

*Student involvement is central to maximizing the learning from the field trip.*

### **Potential Student Tasks in Organizing a Field Trip**

- Brainstorm places to visit.
- Evaluate the educational advantages of the places listed.
- Research the places by using the phone book and making the calls.
- Report information to the class.
- Brainstorm ways to maximize learning related to all Youthbuild components.
- Make pre-trip preparations, including planning routes and planning transportation.
- Calculate transportation costs per student and compare options.
- Prepare questions and observation guides.
- Write follow-up evaluations and make recommendations for future students.
- Write thank you letters.
- Reflect on learning in a personal journal.



Sample Field Trip Information Form: See Appendix 12, Chapter 6

- Prepare a bulletin board or scrapbook about the trip.
- Write about the trip and publish the report in a class or community newspaper.

### ***FIELD TRIPS CAN ENRICH THE CURRICULUM***

- Organize field trips in the community.
- Visit neighborhood construction sites and watch a foundation being built or brick being laid.
- Visit trade shows, lumberyards, mills and manufacturers.
- Conduct information interviews with architects, drafters and other construction professionals.
- Meeting tradespeople and watch them do their jobs.
- Visit museums, art exhibits, science centers, and government office buildings to explore community cultural and job opportunities in their community.
- Tie the visits into class reading and writing activities.

### **E. COMMUNITY EDUCATION ACTIVITIES**

1. Learning about the Community
2. Setting up Community Placements
3. Integrating Academic Activities with Community Service

*Note: A full curriculum for community and leadership skills appears in the Appendix. See also the separate Youthbuild manual on Leadership.*

Learning about the local community and involvement in community service activities can be some of the most important experiences in the Youthbuild program. By working on meaningful volunteer projects in the local community, students broaden their understanding of community needs, meet people they otherwise would not have met, provide valuable services to the community, develop a sense of their own importance to others, learn valuable communication and work-related skills, and strengthen their sense of responsibility. Community service experiences can also help break through stereotypes and prejudices about unfamiliar populations and expose students to new career options. Moreover, the partnerships that evolve can increase respect and positive feelings in the community towards the program.

*“For people who have dropped out and have nothing else to do, Youthbuild is something they should get into instead of getting into trouble. It’s a learning experience for everybody. It helps you with everything from getting your GED to job training. Youthbuild helps out the community around it —with what the community wants and needs and nobody else wants to do.”*

—Brent Harris, graduate, Youthbuild New Bedford

### ***WAYS TO LEARN ABOUT THE COMMUNITY***

- Begin by assessing the local situation. Generate questions that help students determine community needs in education, housing, healthcare, transportation, employment, environment, crime, the elderly, and the young.
- Begin with student concerns and expand into the community to gather statistics, research key problems and solutions, and talk to community organizers and local representatives.
- Help students learn about the community's history by reading information from the library or historical archives.
- Use the study of the local community to teach underlying academic concepts, such as community economics, government, and political systems.
- Study current issues: by reading the newspaper and talking to local people.
- Invite speakers who can discuss historical transitions that have occurred in the local area.
- Teach how the city is structured, who local representatives are, and what power they have.
- Generate discussions about how decisions are made that impact people's lives and how ordinary people can influence decisions.
- Analyze the changes that have occurred over time and the ways neighborhood people participated in the changes. Invite change agents from the community to discuss their roles or invite older residents who have observed the changes.
- Discuss the roles that ordinary people can play in creating positive change. Have students determine the key local concerns and what options exist for dealing with these issues. Some of these options might result in projects for Youthbuild.

*"We do community service projects. Our latest projects involved painting over the graffiti on a landmark lighthouse as part of National Lights Out Night. We also helped the local Boys' and Girls' Club by painting their gym. For the Martin Wilson Art Center, we constructed easels and jewelry boxes and renovated their workspace. We've gotten a lot of support from the community as a result of these efforts to reach out."*

-Kashif Muhammad, Atlantic City Youthbuild

### ***(1) SETUP COMMUNITY PLACEMENTS***

The more organized the community service component of the program is, the more smoothly it will run, and the more educational it will be.

Finding Potential Placements:

Begin by researching which community agencies are looking for volunteers.

Find agencies and programs in the local community that represent a wide range of needs.

Prepare by meeting the groups and presenting Youthbuild; who the students are and what kinds of learning experiences the program is seeking for Youthbuild students.

Explain that the program's goal is for students to provide meaningful service, not do "cleanup work" or provide unpaid menial labor.

**Negotiating the Placements:**

Ask agencies to provide student volunteers with a thorough orientation to the agency, the population they will be serving, and the service they will be performing.

Explain that community service is a required part of the student's participation in Youthbuild, so agencies will be asked to account for the student's time and evaluate his or her work.

Explain that agencies may be asked to write recommendations or act as references for students when they apply for jobs.

Keep in contact with agencies on any issues, changes in hours, attendance, or duties. Ask them to contact you if they are having any problems or questions.

**Organizing the Placements:**

Set aside one afternoon weekly or biweekly for students to leave the program and go to their respective agencies or centers.

Help students plan their timing and bus routes in order to help foster the habit of arriving on time and ready to work.

If possible, give students the opportunity to choose placements that interest them, but also encourage them to challenge themselves.

***IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY PLACEMENTS***

1. Answering phones for AIDS or counseling hotlines
2. Assisting at a daycare center, Head Start program, or nursing home
3. Tutoring in after school programs or elementary schools
4. Tutoring in jails
5. Coaching children's sports
6. Assisting in Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts
7. Doing environmental cleanup
8. Working with Parks and Recreation Departments
9. Volunteering with disabled people
10. Assisting at a local library
11. Assisting at a local homeless shelter
12. Assisting at a local food bank or local health food cooperative
13. Volunteering at the local zoo or animal hospital
14. Volunteering at a hospital or health center
15. Providing construction skills to a local homesteading or housing program or building ramps for accessibility

***ASSIGNMENTS RELATED TO COMMUNITY PLACEMENTS***

Keep journal accounts of their volunteer experiences with teacher-supplied questions.

Research the agency, the problem, or the population with whom they are working.

Publish their research in the program newsletter or give presentations to the class.

Compile and publish a Community Service Resource Book, in which they describe their experiences and inform the community about available services.



Sample Certification of Community Service Hours: see Appendix 12, Chapter 6

### *(3) ACADEMIC IDEAS TO COMPLEMENT COMMUNITY LEARNING*

Academic ideas can emerge from community involvement to greatly enrich the entire experience. Here are some options.

**Identifying Centers of Community:** Write about neighborhood places that are “community centers” where people go to gather, to plan, and to have fun.

**Photographic Study:** Do a photographic study of the community, focus on buildings or institutions that are most representative of the community.

**Book of Building Histories:** Make a book of buildings; describe their histories and discuss changes over the years.

**Create a Livable, Healthy City:** In small groups, create a city block with large sheets of paper or oak tag (heavy paper, 125lb), colored markers, scissors, scotch tape, and colored construction paper. Discuss what they feel would make a livable, healthy city, and decide who will draw what. Their task is to share ideas and skills. When finished, each group will show their creations.

**Organize a Community Meeting.** Help students organize a community meeting around a key local issue. They should plan the meeting in advance, deciding issues to be discussed, who will be invited, advertising, solutions to be suggested, who will facilitate, location, potential follow-up.

**Community Panel Discussion.** Have students facilitate a “community panel discussion” by inviting a diverse cross-section of community members (single mother, disabled person, elderly person) to discuss their needs and feelings on a pressing community issue. Prepare questions in advance and have a moderator ask the questions. If appropriate, organize the community meeting at night and invite a local councilperson to attend.

**Community Demonstration.** Suggest that students participate in or help organize a demonstration related to a community issue. Have students write a report analyzing the experience, including community reaction and the impact on the issue.

**Community Newspaper.** Have students publish a community newspaper to educate their neighbors about the issues they have researched. Have them suggest solutions to community problems.

**Meet with Local Politicians.** Have students meet with a local councilperson about the issues they have investigated. Help them prepare to express their points of view on a key local issue, including an explanation of the problem, examples, causes, and suggested solution for the problem.

**Community Research.** Have students research the history of a local neighborhood and changes that have occurred over the last 100 or 200 years. Visit local archives to find information and photographs. Find people who have lived there for many years and interview them about their knowledge of the area and how it has changed.

**Community Cartoons.** Have students research and draw cartoons about important community issues and how they occur, such as abandonment, crime rates, unemployment, gentrification, and redlining. Publish the cartoons in a community newspaper.

**Interviews with Homeless People.** Have students imagine that they are journalists who are interviewing homeless people about their lives and housing problems. Develop a list of at least 10 questions that they plan to ask people who live on the street or in shelters. With a partner, have them videotape the interviews with people, concluding by videotaping themselves as they give their analyses and feelings about what they have learned and how it related to information from class.

**Volunteering.** Suggest that students volunteer to share construction skills with a homesteading or sweat equity project in another part of the city for a day. Write an essay about where they

worked, what they experienced, and how it differed from what they expected. Relate what they learned on the site to what they have learned in class.

## F. INVITING GUEST SPEAKERS

The process of inviting guest speakers can also teach leadership, organizing, and planning skills. Especially, generate suggestions from the students on topics they want to learn more about, i.e., parenting, sexuality, AIDS/HIV, drug abuse and treatment, banking, credit unions, buying a house, starting a business, or buying a car.

### *WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO*

- Help decide appropriate speakers
- Plan questions
- Choose dates
- Research possible speakers
- Greet the speaker at the door and guide him or her to the classroom
- Write and/or give the introduction for the speaker
- Moderate the discussion
- Write answers to their questions as the speaker responds
- Evaluate the speaker
- Write an article for a class or community newspaper
- Write follow-up thank you letters

### *IDEAS FOR GUEST SPEAKERS*

- A representative from OSHA on site safety
- A Red Cross worker training students in first aid
- Contractors and tradespeople describing their field
- Women working in non-traditional fields with advice on work strategies
- Union representatives about the requirements for application to their unions
- Tool and equipment vendors to demonstrate their wares
- Speakers of color or ethnic groups to discuss issues of race and ethnicity
- Representatives of the arts to give suggestions for creative outlets and alternative career options
- Local artists, poets, and musicians to do workshops
- Well-known athletes to discuss the work, self-discipline, and skill involved in their careers

## G. LEADERSHIP TRAINING AS A PROGRAM THREAD

*Good leadership is "taking responsibility to make things go right for your life, your family, your program, and your community."*

- Youthbuild Definition

Leadership development should be integrated like a thread throughout the entire program, with a clear plan for giving opportunities to learn, demonstrate, and evaluate leadership skills. All staff should participate in developing the leadership development plan. See the Appendix for a Curriculum Model for Leadership Development.

The classroom should structure life in such a way that individuals frequently have specific responsibilities for facilitating and participating in small group projects, implementing classroom management tasks, and leading discussions on how to get something done. All students, not just students in selected leadership positions, can be involved in practicing listening skills, group facilitation and discussion skills, presentations to the group, and note-taking for the group.

Teachers can help committees determine goals, responsibilities, and deadlines. These student groups can take responsibility for arranging speakers, planning trips, and other events, and organizing meetings related to classroom topics.

### *TIPS FOR TEACHERS*

#### Leadership Skills Include Confronting Personal Behavior

Many Youthbuild students are strikingly intelligent, articulate, and capable of influencing other people. Many have had leadership roles “on the street.” However, many have made very poor decisions about their own lives and have sometimes led others in a negative direction. Some of them are eager to step into leadership roles in the program without having corrected their own self-defeating patterns of behavior. For this reason, the Youthbuild definition of leadership puts taking responsibility for making things go right in one’s own life as part of a leader’s role. By addressing personal behavior in the context of leadership development, you can help students become leaders who can improve conditions that affect people the students care about. That means confronting issues in their personal lives, changing self-destructive behaviors, becoming free of drug or alcohol addictions, and making the transition from the street to a positive lifestyle. They will need skills such as:

- Resisting negative peer pressure.
- Building intimate friendships and romantic relationships on a sound basis.
- Managing conflict.
- Handling parenting roles responsibly.
- Managing time, budgeting money, and setting personal goals.
- Dealing with anger and grief in a positive way.
- Communicating effectively.
- Developing good work and learning habits.

#### Help Students Experience the Rewards of Helping Others

Youthbuild helps students master the obstacles to a responsible personal life. It helps students experience the rewards of helping other people and improving every situation through contributing to good group process, helping to make good policy decisions, and taking responsibility to get things done that benefit the group and achieve the group’s goals.

#### Study Historical Leaders & Current Leadership Models

In the classroom, students can study the goals, strategies, and biographies of good leaders in history, in the immediate community, or in current events. A successful Youthbuild program will produce many positive role models and a certain number of young people who are permanently committed to playing a leadership role to improve the community and society.

### View Students as Potential Leaders & Resources for the Community

You can help students reach leadership goals if you view them as potential leaders and resources for the community, not as clients or problems. How you view students will affect how students see themselves. Staff must offer profound respect for the intelligence of the students by consulting them whenever possible in making decisions that will affect them or the program. Staff should express appreciation for all kinds and levels of leadership, including people who are responsible for their own lives and take care of their families, people who quietly contribute, and people who inspire and organize whole communities.

*"I never knew I had leadership abilities in me. I was always a follower, but now I can walk my own path and be a leader. I want to get my associates degree in biology, in environmental life science. I want to work in environmental education. I just finished a 30-day internship with YMCA, teaching environmental education. I got paid for that."*

—Chris Smith, graduate, Youthbuild Rockford

## 7. Teaching Strategies

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1. Principles That Motivate Students
2. Fostering Cross-Cultural & Gender Respect
3. Establishing Discipline in The Classroom

### 7.1. PRINCIPLES THAT MOTIVATE STUDENTS

How subjects are taught is as important as what is taught. The methods and strategies used in the Youthbuild classroom send powerful messages to the students about respect for learning and respect for others. This chapter makes general suggestions for setting a good tone in the classroom and specific suggestions for teaching each subject.

#### *(1) BELIEVE IN THE STUDENTS*

**Your expectations of student capabilities greatly influence student learning.** Set your sights high, while understanding their past experience and feelings of failure. You can help them develop faith in their abilities. In this way, they can begin to confront, rather than avoid, difficulties and problems. Help them develop realistic ideas about academic progress by not pressuring them to succeed so quickly that they become frustrated and disappointed by yet another failure.

#### *(2) MAINTAIN AN ATMOSPHERE OF RESPECT*

Reinforce respect as a daily value. It is not enough for staff to be respectful of students; you must also be firm in not allowing students to disrespect each other or other staff. This is especially important as more women join the program. Do not permit cursing, name-calling, put-downs, and sexist, racist, or homophobic comments. Model behavior that praises students and other staff and give the students opportunities to do that for each other. If you set a tone of mutual respect and appreciation, then students will reinforce it with great relief. Tie negative behavior directly to how it inhibits learning for each one and the team that is trying to help everyone to succeed. If students persist in disrespectful behavior, involve the counselor and use discipline according to program policies.

#### *(3) ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBILITY*

The most important goal for the students is to take responsibility for their own learning, no matter what the specific academic program. Self-discipline is learned behavior. Teach this vital life skill by establishing systems in which they have to exhibit responsibility: participate in decision-making, and design their own plans for finishing and correcting their work. If students ask you questions in a group session, ask if anyone else in the class can answer. Give students real responsibilities such as planning and organizing events, organizing the classroom, assisting with purchasing, making phone calls, and acting as team leaders. Ask them for ideas on how to better organize the classroom or make their learning more productive.

#### *(4) ESTABLISH ROUTINES AND STRUCTURE*

With regular routines, there is less possibility of chaos, confusion and idleness--all of which can foster disruptive behavior. Routines help (1) establish trust, (2) a sense of security, and (3) establish independence. When internalized, they help develop student responsibility and initiative.

**(5) ESTABLISH A SAFE ATMOSPHERE IN THE CLASSROOM**

“Safe” is when young people can ask and answer questions without being afraid of saying the wrong thing or being put down.

*“We’ve created a safe environment here, a place where students feel safe asking questions. They won’t get ridiculed. No question is out of line.”*

Mike Cross, Youthbuild Fort Berthold

**(6) PROVIDE SUCCESS EXPERIENCES**

The classroom environment should recognize student achievement and reward progress. Work with students until everyone has mastered a skill. When the daily program is rewarding for the students, there is less need for disciplinary measures. Adult learners often fear making mistakes in front of their peers. Acknowledge these fears. Help students get over the fear of new learning and help them feel successful by highlighting their strengths. Be careful not to put students on the spot.

When asking questions, it is helpful to begin by asking questions that a majority of people can answer; this creates a positive atmosphere and an environment where answering questions is not risky. “Open questions” that have more than one right answer also help students feel more comfortable responding.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR PROVIDING AN EXPERIENCE OF SUCCESS**

- Make tasks clear and simple
- Have students practice before doing a demonstration or taking a test
- Reward perseverance
- Make completion requirements clear
- Use individual learning plans
- Show measurable progress
- Use charts or lists to check off skills attained
- Have recognition ceremonies for successful performance
- Organize games and fun activities as rewards for completing tasks
- Provide opportunities for students to attend special events such as conferences and workshops
- Give bonuses for perfect attendance

**FOCUS ON PRACTICAL TOPICS FOR IMMEDIATE APPLICATION**

Adults, even young adults, learn best when they can build on what they know and learn things that are relevant in their day-to-day lives. Help student learn math, reading, and writing skills that are immediately and directly applied in their vocational, construction, and community work.

*“All students don’t learn the same. Learning should be tailored around students so that it doesn’t force them to learn one way. Learning should not be limited to the classroom. The whole world is a classroom. Take them out in the world and teach them. Strategies? I use everything around me to make it work. Newspapers, videos, guest speakers, regular people, families, the elderly, the young, the entire community.”*

-Robert Bell, Youthbuild Philadelphia

### *RESPOND TO STUDENTS' NEEDS*

Use a combination of strategies to address the students, with varied experiences and abilities, as they learn together. Incorporate opportunities for students of different abilities to work together and benefit from each other's strengths. However, all students need to work individually, focusing on areas that need improvement. Address the varied learning needs in these ways:

- Small (mixed-level) group learning: working in groups of three or four on common problems, capitalizing on everyone's strengths.
- Small (same-level) group learning: working with peers at the same skill level.
- Large group learning: reading aloud, demonstrations, guest speakers, or presenting new topics. To increase participation, occasionally ask people to discuss the topic with 1 - 2 people next to them.
- Individual work on skills outlined as benchmarks in their individual plan, for study and tutoring time.
- Peer tutoring so advanced students can reinforce their knowledge while teaching others.
- Provide tutoring, either during the class day or in an after-school program.
- Give individualized homework or modify worksheets for use by different reading levels.
- Keep a variety of high-interest texts and material for low and high-level readers.
- Explore literacy programs that offer tutoring on evenings and weekends.
- Encourage expression of various abilities including the artistic, verbal, physical, and musical.

### *VALIDATE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE*

The curriculum should be designed to engage students of varying reading levels, varying life experiences, and uneven, limited academic backgrounds. The curriculum and the classroom environment can involve students in learning on a primary level, drawing from and validating the students' own experiences in order to be rich, meaningful, and relevant. Classroom activities can elucidate those things that the students already know in order to better introduce them to the literacy and trade-related skills they need to know. In addition, such exercises help the students to become aware of the tools already at their disposal.

Many activities incorporate brainstorming which is spontaneous, uncensored sharing of information from the students' own life experiences, knowledge and observations. Exercises in journal writing encourage student reflection on personal and classroom experiences. Allowing students time for telling stories from their own lives builds confidence and reminds students that what they have done or seen is relevant and valuable.

Before teaching, ask students to describe experiences they've had with tools, topics and materials. Ask them to give examples or demonstrate something they know. Draw on student experience by doing the following:

- Have students write personal histories to use as class text
- Have students write instructions or descriptions to use as class text
- Have students brainstorm possible solutions to problems

- Encourage and praise guessing
- Encourage and praise questions
- Praise students for the knowledge they bring with them
- Recognize sharing of information
- Pool information from the students as a way of introducing new material— drawing out the information they already possess as a method of presenting the topic.

### ***PROMOTE SELF-ESTEEM***

Teachers should offer frequent praise, recognize small accomplishments and insights, to help students feel proud that they have mastered a particular concept. Student effort is valued and publicly acknowledged through individual contracts, wall charts, award ceremonies, and unit completion certificates.

*"We try to make our students feel okay about who they are. There was a time when it wasn't okay to be Indian. There is a whole movement now to preserve our cultural identity, and our young people are becoming a part of that."*

-Dennis Fox, Youthbuild Fort Berthold, New Town, North Dakota

### ***SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTING SELF-ESTEEM***

- Demonstrate belief that they can succeed.
- Recognize change and growth, however small.
- Recognize new learning and creative thinking, even if it is not the "answer."
- Praise them for making the decision every day to continue on this new path of self-development.
- Give praise and positive reinforcement for following program rules.
- Provide inspirational and motivating speakers who can talk about when they felt insecure.
- Provide community and business mentors.
- Give students increasing responsibility.
- Encourage students to teach others.
- Solicit advice and recommendations from students on program policies, classroom activities, subject matter, and materials.

*"What surprised me the most of what I learned through Youthbuild was that love children, and I just want to help a lot of people. Growing up, I never really had that opportunity to give back or volunteer. Once you've seen that smile or thank you from a child what it can do to your heart is rewarding—it's so fulfilling—you end up needing it like a drug or something. I like seeing people succeed."*

-Jahi Davis, graduate, Youthbuild Philadelphia

### ***ENCOURAGE INTERDEPENDENCE***

Learning together in groups, without constant guidance from the teacher, increases a sense of responsibility and self-confidence. Students can learn to depend on each other to establish discipline and trust. Help them to realize that they can assist each other in quieting down, paying attention, and listening. Show them, through exercises and planned activities, that they

can actually rely on each other for help in their academic work. This approach reinforces the idea that everyone is a teacher as well as a learner.

*They've been through so much. We have to respect that. We also have to help them learn that they can take responsibility for themselves. But they've got to exhale. It's a slow process. Don't rush them; don't push them. Work with it.*

--Pearl Lewis, Jefferson Parish Youthbuild

## 7.2. FOSTERING CROSS-CULTURAL & GENDER RESPECT

In most Youthbuild programs, students will reflect both the growing diversity in the country and the expansion of women into non-traditional jobs. Teachers need skilled and steady monitoring and facilitation to build a team that respects diversity. With more and more women entering a male-dominated trade, Youthbuild must actively deal with gender issues and the relations between men and women. Lack of self-esteem can prevent women from taking full advantage of the program. Lack of self-esteem in men has been documented as one reason for violence against women, especially domestic violence. Youthbuild must prepare students for the inclusion of women in what has traditionally been a male-dominated trade.

### A. GENDER AWARENESS

In handling gender issues, help students reach a common understanding of the definitions and the ways in which gender stereotypes affect both women and men from childhood on, both positively and negatively. Gender is usually a hot button issue in which it is assumed that only women are put into boxes by society, with the expectation that men lose, if women advance. You need to draw out examples of when men have been restricted or made fun of for going against gender stereotypes. You can point to football players, like Rafer Johnson, who cross-stitch or train in ballet for better balance, or women like Annika Sorenson who has a better winning record in golf than Tiger Woods.

Once students understand the definition of gender and stereotypes, you can use daily interactions to ask them about reflex reactions that occur in everyday life to stereotypes; what men should and shouldn't do, and for what women should and shouldn't do. This kind of learning needs to be reinforced throughout the program as occasions arise. Here are a few ideas for exercises.

#### ***DEFINITIONS OF SEX AND GENDER: AN EXERCISE***

Ask students what is the difference between these two.

Explain that sex is biological and universal, but gender refers to social or cultural roles prescribed by society to determine expectations of each sex. Gender refers to socially-constructed roles that can differ culture to culture and in different periods of history. Explain that gender is about having the freedom to choose your role in society without fear of ridicule or harassment.

Write up a list of examples and ask if they are gender or sex. Examples:

- Men cannot give birth to babies; women can. (Answer: Sex)
- In many countries, women are paid differently than men for the same jobs. (Answer: gender)
- Women can breastfeed and men can bottle feed babies. (Answer, women, sex; men, gender role that can be taken by either sex.)
- Most construction workers in this country are male. (Answer: gender. In parts of some countries, women are the majority of construction workers.)

- In some countries, society makes fun of men who want to be artists or nurses. (Answer: gender)
- According to United Nations statistics, women do 67% of the world's work, but earn 10% of the world's income. (Answer: gender)

### ***CHILDHOOD ROLES SHAPE GENDER STEREOTYPES IN ADULTHOOD***

In this exercise, ask students in small groups to make four charts: Boys Do, Girls Do, Boys Don't, Girls Don't. Ask them to list messages that they received in their childhood. When all the charts are up on the wall, ask them to characterize the messages. Examples: usually, boys are encouraged to be out in the world, courageous, physically active. Girls are told to be passive and caretakers: speak quieter, help with household chores, don't get dirty, sit properly, be courteous, etc. If you initiate a discussion, you can draw out conclusions about how these childhood messages translate into adult life. For example, women are usually assumed to be responsible for food or arranging social occasions in the workplace, a continuation of domestic roles before women entered the workplace in great numbers.

### ***DISCUSSION ON GENDER***

Ask the males to meet and discuss how gender role expectations affected them in their childhood and as adults and the same with the females in the class. Ask them how gender stereotypes forced them to do things they didn't want to do or prevented them from doing things that they wanted to try. Also, ask them to cite women or men role models that may have denied gender stereotypes. These can be famous people or people in their communities or cultural history. Draw out any new realizations or learning from these exercises.

Finally, talk to them about the stress for each sex in changing gender roles. Men are fearful that jobs will be taken, and they will lose. But, they are also restricted from doing some roles in the home that some men enjoy: cooking or playing with/caring for children. Women are feeling empowered that roles are opening up in the workplace, but they are stressed because they still have much of the power and responsibility at home, so they are carrying two jobs. Both sexes are reluctant sometimes to give up their traditional power areas. Again, emphasize that gender roles are about choice – choice, free from ridicule or harassment—so that each person can realize their full talents and interests.

Male-female relationships are particularly important and should be dealt with through reading and writing activities in the academic classroom and through discussions in rap groups and support groups. Most of this will happen in the counseling component, but in the classroom it is also possible to discuss issues of sexuality, pregnancy, and childcare; power dynamics between men and women; rape and domestic violence and how they can be prevented; sexual harassment in the workplace, how to prevent it, and what to do about it; male and female attitudes about women's and men's roles and opportunities. Some of these discussions should be held in a controlled counseling sessions, either as a group or individual.

Studying the history of women in the construction industry can best be done in the classroom.

If the program does not have female site workers or vocational instructors, it is important to provide role models for the young women in the program so they do not feel alienated. It is also important that young men meet women in the trades to help them overcome any prejudices they might have about women's abilities and roles.

*"I expected that because I was a woman, and already had my high school diploma, people would say, 'You shouldn't be here,' and they didn't. I went out there and worked hard like everybody else. I needed the program as much as anybody, because as a young person who wants to do something in my community and really learn how to organize, there was no other place for me to go. I needed Youthbuild to do the things I*

*wanted to do in my life, but maybe not in the traditional sense of how Youthbuild is used."*

—Heather Rebeiro, graduate, Youthbuild New Bedford

## B. INTEGRATING GENDER & CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES

The curriculum that is infused with the study of culture and change is by its very nature dynamic. It requires active research on the part of the teachers. It demands that teachers seek out materials that accurately reflect the history and interests of the group; free of cultural and historical bias, and promote deeper understanding of complex historical and economic forces. Choose books, films, posters, speakers, and computer programs wisely. In the Appendix, teachers will find a variety of useful resources.

The study of cultural identity and gender roles in history can foster an awareness and respect in the classroom. As part of the Youthbuild emphasis on respect for diversity, you can integrate the curriculum with many examples of cultures already in the classroom. In the Appendix, there are numerous resources for exploring cultural differences. You can integrate cultural discussions, with questions about how gender roles play out differently in different cultures.

Using historical material or interviews with older men and women from different cultures provides young people with an opportunity to see the roots of their present experience, to find role models in history, and to enhance self-esteem.

As with gender, teachers and students can discuss stereotypes and how other people's perceptions box in people of all ethnic groups, sexes, and sexual preferences. Teachers can create an environment where students feel comfortable talking about their encounters with prejudice. How did it make them feel? Where did the prejudice come from? What can be, and has been, done to create positive change?

Students can also learn about the variety of cultural expression that exists in the United States through exchanges with other Youthbuild groups. They can meet people whose habits and traditions are very different from their own, and in this way learn more about themselves and begin to overcome their own stereotypes and prejudices.

The handbook entitled *Leadership Development at a Youthbuild Program* includes a number of exercises that help students develop respect for their own cultural identities, as well as, the identities of others. Biographies of important women and men can be integrated into all of the subject areas. Highlight the contributions that diverse ethnic groups and sexes have made to the subject areas that will be taught. Use resources and learning materials that are diverse and represent the ethnicity of the student population.

*The Youthbuild low teacher-to-student ratio should help each student to feel respected, supported, and "heard" by the staff. With adequate individual student-teacher time, the students can feel that the staff is committed, caring, and competent, and that they can be counted on for ongoing support.*

## C. FOSTERING COOPERATION AND INTERDEPENDENCE

An important goal of the classroom and the worksite is to create a "family-like environment;" a supportive framework that can help the trainee through periods of discouragement. This involves helping students to see that it is in their own best interest to cooperate with the group and feel the mutual protection and support of the group.

Working in groups can help students to develop problem-solving skills by actively analyzing and solving the problems they face in class or in a work environment. By solving problems together, by tutoring each other, by learning in teams, students can learn to think logically, listen carefully, discriminate, analyze, and evaluate.

On the worksite, students will often be expected to work as a team and will come to learn that cooperative interchange is more expedient, safe and productive. They will begin to see that construction is a cooperative process and that there is an interrelationship of all the trades. They should learn the ways in which tradespeople respect each other and complement one another (and the many mishaps that can occur when they don't). In-class and on-site experiences with teamwork can help to prepare them to work comfortably in a cooperative work environment.

Encourage peer teaching. Students are an excellent source of knowledge and experience, and a valuable instructional resource. Teachers can use students to assist in helping others who need extra assistance. By so doing, the learner receives extra attention and the student teacher reinforces his or her skills through demonstration and explanation. The following are some suggestions for encouraging cooperative learning and peer teaching. Have students:

- Demonstrate skills to each other for review
- Write instructions for each other to follow
- Make videotaped demonstrations for other students to study
- Tutor other students
- Research topics of interest and present information to the group
- Write tests for the group
- Review with each other
- Write dialogue journals, in response to each other's thoughts
- Write plays together
- Respond to and help revise each other's work
- Read in small groups and discuss what they have read

*"My class work involves students in writing their own personal stories, through which we are able to discover and reflect on how they are connected to larger social forces, particularly as these affected their own educations. Students also discover their connections to the traditions through which their communities have withstood and acted to change these historical challenges."*

-Peneil Joseph, Youthbuild Philadelphia

The Youthbuild curriculum can be a springboard for recognition of our common humanity. You can help young people understand that they often have more in common with people of different races, religions, cultures, genders and sexual orientations than they realize. The Youthbuild curriculum can be used to work toward the goal of a truly democratic society where every citizen is a participating member and all people's rights and freedoms are respected.

### **7.3. ESTABLISHING DISCIPLINE IN THE CLASSROOM**

For maximum learning, you must create an environment that fosters self-discipline, minimizes the need for punitive action, and encourages mature, responsible behavior. Students can also help reinforce these qualities in each other.

### Clear Rules, Consistency, and Follow Through

To teach habits that will enable students to obtain and keep a job, be firm and consistent with the rules. Establish clear expectations and rules of conduct. With student input (increasing their sense of responsibility for each other), decide the consequences for each infraction. Follow through immediately and appropriately for every infraction. Students learn right away whether the program staff can be trusted to enforce rules and whether or not they can be manipulated. Erratic, uneven, or unjustified enforcement of rules can undermine the best program. If the rules are appropriately enforced and even if students protest, they will learn to take the staff at their word and make decisions accordingly. Following through on consequences for rule violation also teaches responsibility. It tells them that the staff believes students are making choices and, since they are adults, they must take the consequences of those choices. It tells that certain behaviors are unacceptable and will undermine their ability to achieve their goals. Emphasize the effect on other peers.

### Back-Up Systems

Design a backup system for times when a staff member cannot and should not act alone in following through on rules and consequences. Arrange for other staff to immediately assist with disruptive students without interrupting the flow of the work in progress or interrupting other students. Do not focus whole group's attention on that behavior. Instead, develop in advance a plan for swiftly and quietly removing a student from the center of attention. Students who are acting responsibly should be rewarded with positive attention.

### Demonstrate Caring and Respect for Students

The concept of "Clear Rules and Consistency," is not meant to give license for staff members to behave in authoritarian, rigid, or humiliating ways in response to student misbehavior. Young people will test the caring and competence of the adults in many ways. The challenge for the staff is to show respect and caring at the same time as they insist on the best from every student.

### Avoid Discipline Pitfalls

Staff can sometimes engage in behavior that serves—often unwittingly—to undermine the development of respect, responsibility and self-discipline. Here are some suggestions on how to avoid undermining the program's intent to promote the development of mature habits.

Don't ever stop being a role model.

If staffs develop friendships with students, there is a temptation to "hang out" with students and treat them as peers, socializing after program hours, talking to them in confidence, telling jokes, etc. This is especially tempting if staff and students are close in age. However, students continue to look to staff for guidance. Always act as a strong and caring parent figure rather than a "hangin' buddy." Always be a mentor and a guide. Be yourself, but always show mature, adult behavior and help students learn how to do the same by watching you. Under no circumstances should any staff member ever drink alcohol with students.

Never loan money to students.

Sometimes staff makes the mistake of loaning money to students because they clearly need it at certain times, and the staff hopes that it will deepen trust. In fact, it tends to undermine relationships because the student is almost never in a position to pay back the loan and feels guilty and sometimes even resentful. The staff member may also become resentful. It is better for a program to have a policy of making small grants to students whose circumstances warrant it.

Don't vent frustrations with students.

It is tempting to see students as friends or confidantes and to share with them frustrations with the program, staff or students. However, this creates a negative atmosphere and undermines

other staff. Be honest with students, but be diplomatic, professional and respectful of everyone at all times. Undermining other staff can undermine the entire program because negativity can tend to snowball.

Don't violate confidentiality.

Always respect students' right to confidentiality in regard to peers, community members, and parents. If students feel staff cannot be trusted with their personal concerns, it will profoundly undermine the program's credibility. If students confide concerns, which the staff member is required to discuss with his or her supervisor, let the student know it will happen and why it is essential. The program should have a general confidentiality policy that is known to the students.

Don't give up.

Disappointments are inevitable. Many hardworking and well-intentioned staff members occasionally feel disillusioned with students' attempts to disrupt routines and break rules; or with students' self-destructive behavior just when they start to succeed. Remember that students are testing the staff's commitment and belief in them and are also struggling with their own fears. Don't lose the "Battle of Belief." Continue to work with them, to trust in them, to encourage them, to be consistent, and to believe they can do it.

Go beyond what students expect.

Every small thing indicating that the staff truly care — and are not there just because it is their job — will have a positive effect on the students' trust, personal motivation, and, incidentally, on discipline.

## 8. Teaching Specific Subjects

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1. Teaching Reading
2. Teaching Writing
3. Teaching Math
4. Teaching Vocational Skills
5. Preparing for the GED

### 8.1. TEACHING READING

In-class reading should provide the students with the opportunity to get personal attention from the teacher, as well as highly motivating, satisfying learning experiences alone and with the group. If the students spend the majority of their classroom time working in workbooks, they often feel little incentive to attend class; but if they are engaged in personal relationships that are fun and challenging, they are more likely to participate regularly. Teachers may want and need to allocate some classroom time for students to work through specific texts and workbook assignments, but it is recommended that they supplement this with a range of additional enjoyable reading activities.

Set aside a time each day to read a portion of a high-interest book to the class. Read brief, complete stories. Reading aloud to the class encourages development of listening comprehension with material that may still be too difficult for students to read independently. While others are working silently, ask pairs or small groups of students to choose a text of which you have multiple copies. Ask them to read portions of the text silently, while you also read, then discuss their feelings and opinions about the characters, the plot, the main idea, etc. In this informal and less pressured setting, you can introduce comprehension strategies. For high and low-level readers alike, reading a high-interest book is a new and exciting experience. (See the Appendix for additional resources and books.)

*"The reading levels in my class range from the very low to the especially high. I like to have a lot of books in the room, and I buy as many kinds of interesting books with cool covers as I can. We read a couple of short stories as a group every day. I find the best literature is anything short and intriguing, or long but engaging enough that you can read it every day. Or anything that requires you to read to do something else."*

-Robbie Fransden, PACE/SIPA Youthbuild

Have on hand a variety of practical reading materials for students. They may have a specific desire to improve their reading in a specific area and will be more motivated if they are working on something they feel strongly about. Examples of high-motivation life-skills reading include driver's manual, religious texts, recipes, directions to make or fix something real (make a model or construct something as you read the instructions), job applications, want ads, newspapers, health brochures, first aid books, and books on parenting.

#### A. TIPS ON READING ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNERS AT ALL LEVELS

**Library Corner:** Partition off a part of the classroom with a comfortable chair and lamp and give students time to browse and checkout books, magazines, and newspapers.

**Writing about Reading:** Ask students to write personal histories about their own experiences with reading, such as reflections on learning to read, memories of special books or teachers, what has been easy, and what has been hard.

**Reading the Writing of Other Students:** This method can be an important learning and teambuilding tool by using the poems, plays, stories and essays by students.

**Construction-related Reading:** Use construction-related materials tasks to teach reading skills, which reinforces the relationship between construction and academics.

**Teacher-made Texts:** Write a story on a particular topic of interest, such as an open-ended story that can encourage students to finish it or compile related readings and activities.

**Reading to Children of Students:** Ask students who have children to bring them to class (with the teacher's permission) for the students to read to them. Students may also write or dictate stories for their children.

**Comic Books:** Today many comic books deal with adult concepts in an entertaining, non-threatening format. Health departments often write brochures about AIDS and drugs in a comic book format; Golden Legacy Comics are biographies of important African-Americans. Students can both read and write comic books about topics they are studying.

**Plays and Poems:** Ask students to work in pairs or small groups and practice performing plays or reading poetry aloud. Ask them to write alternative endings to plays or write poems modeled on the styles of those they read.

## B. GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL READING ASSESSMENTS

Plan to do an individual reading assessment with each student. Make time early on in the program (during orientation, if possible) to talk with each student about his or her school history and experiences with reading. Listen to each student read.

Before you begin, explain to the student that the purpose of this session is for both of you to learn about his or her interests and concerns, and about what the student does well while reading. Explain that this is not a test, but an opportunity to determine what materials and approaches will best facilitate the student's development as a reader. Then use the information in the assessment to guide the choice of materials for the student. Plan to re-assess for improvements or changes mid-way through the program year.

### Oral Reading Passage(s)

Select a variety of passages from various levels of text. Tell the student that one of the reasons you are asking him to read is self-assessment; the more he knows, the more he can make decisions about his own educational needs. Tell the student you are going to write the answers down so that you can talk about them later and use them to help you plan.

Ask the student to choose the reading passage. Make notations on a copy of the passage as the student reads, and attach it to the summary. Ask the student to read the passage aloud, then summarize the text and answer the questions.

Note student's ability to re-tell the text and answer questions. Describe errors in comprehension. Use the following categories to assess the student's ability to handle the passage and suggest that the student attempt a more/less difficult passage depending on their reading level.

**Independent** = Recognizes 98% of words and has 100% comprehension. The student can work without assistance at this level.

**Instructional** = Recognizes 95% of words and has 75% comprehension. The student can work at this level with teacher assistance and instruction.

**Frustration** = Recognizes less than 90% of words and has less than 50% comprehension. This level is too difficult.

Silent Reading Passage

Suggest to the student that he or she silently read the passage that you feel is at the student's instructional level. Ask the student to summarize the passage and ask additional comprehension questions when the student is done. Use the comprehension guidelines above to help determine the readability of the passage for the student.



Sample: Individual Reading Assessment Summary see Appendix 12, Chapter 8

## C. WAYS TO EVALUATE STUDENT READING

Students may demonstrate understanding of a character and plot in books they have read by:

- Writing a book review for a class newsletter
- Writing a book report, including other references
- Designing a mural
- Designing a book jacket
- Designing a movie poster



Checklist of Reading Strengths and Difficulties See Appendix 12, Chapter 8

## 8.2. TEACHING WRITING

Writing is a critical skill in life, but it works best in Youthbuild if it is practical and relevant to the students' lives. All writing in real life is done for a purpose. People write to communicate, to explain, to persuade, to instruct, and to describe. The writing process involves three essential stages: (1) pre-writing, (2) writing, and (3) revising.

### A. PRE-WRITING: DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE RESULT!

*When students feel they have "nothing to say," pre-writing stimulates thought about a topic and allows them to explore their thoughts without worrying about the final product.*

Pre-writing can involve discussing, brainstorming, listing, outlining, jotting notes, reacting to stimuli, "stream of consciousness" writing, journal writing, and writing to music. You can invite students to try these techniques in large and small groups, then individually, before using a structured format.

Also, ask them to write on every other line using lined paper to help them with revisions.

### B. PRACTICING & GETTING FEEDBACK

- Help students develop a critical distance from their writing in order to evaluate content, proofread for specific errors, then reorganize and edit into a final draft.
- Encourage students to improve their own writing by reading each other's work.
- Encourage students to edit their own and others' papers.
- Offer guidelines for students to give constructive criticism to each other.

- Use resumes and fundraising proposals for proofreading exercises.
- One of the required pre-tests for Youthbuild is a writing sample that goes into their Education File. These questions are an excellent form of pre-writing about things students that students care about.

*Students will write best when they write about things they know and care about.*



Form for Writing Sample see Appendix 12, Chapter 8

### C. TEACH A VARIETY OF WRITING FORMATS

Students need to know about many different forms of writing (essays, articles, letters, short stories, poems, and reports) and which forms are appropriate for which audiences. But, there are a number of writing formats that students should learn how to use in their own lives. The most effective writing exercises are those in which they write about personal experiences, subjects of great interest, or topics with immediate application. See the list of Types of Writing Assignments in Youthbuild in the Appendix.

*"My long term goal is to go to school for journalism and start interning at different media organizations. I'm in a writer's group. Some of my writing has even been published. I'd like to graduate with honors, as a leader in the school doing extracurricular activities. Then graduate, get a job in broadcasting, or in print, and build from there."*

—Christina Head, graduate, Youth Action Youthbuild

### D. STUDENTS LOVE TO SEE THEIR WRITING IN PRINT!

Student publications are one of the best ways to encourage students to write for a purpose. You can also integrate computer skill development with the publication of student writing. Involve them in all aspects of publishing; writing, collecting, typing, editing, illustrating, printing, collating, and distributing – activities that build team and leadership skills. *Publication Ideas:* newsletters, literary magazines, training manuals for the worksite, handbooks for new students, and yearbooks.

Using many work-related skills, a student publication committee has to determine goals, share responsibilities, complete assignments, and meet deadlines. If students type and save all of the writing they do during the course of the program, they have many selections to use when they are ready to edit and compile a newsletter, manual, or yearbook.

*"I am an adamant believer in the use of the computer as an integral part of the writing process. The computer is not just for the final draft. After learning the fundamental skills of word processing, the days of erasing and writing the "first draft" on every other line of the page are gone. When students discover the freedom and ease with which they can write and revise on the computer, their writing skills improve dramatically."*

-Rosie Hartzler, Youthbuild Portland

## 8.3. TEACHING MATH

Many students come into the Youthbuild classroom with fears and memories of failure related to mathematics. Teachers should help trainees see how often they already use math in their daily lives, especially on the construction site, and give them experiences of success so that they can continue to develop their skills. Teachers should work with the construction staff to list ways math can be applied.

**Focus math teaching on the connection between the math they learn in class and on the construction site.**

## A. SETTING THE LEARNING CLIMATE FOR TEACHING MATH

- Begin the lessons in math by acknowledging that math is often difficult and uncomfortable for many people.
- Either in the large group, small groups, or pairs, it gives students time to discuss their memories and experiences around math.
- Express confidence that the students can learn math.
- Ask the group to come up with a signal, such as raising a hand or lifting a pencil, if they find a particular math problem to be confusing or unclear.
- Consider having students write a brief essay in which they describe their earliest memories of learning math or similar experiences.
- Ask them to describe what has been hard and what has been easy about math.
- Ask them to discuss the ways they have used math in daily life.

*"Mathematics has often been presented as a bunch of complicated rules and procedures that only a few 'math type' can do well. I would like to be instrumental in breaking down this misconception, because it presents a rather impoverished view of the subject. As a nontraditional math educator, I aspire to provide access to careers in the mathematical sciences to groups of students who have historically been 'turned off' to math."*

-Patricia McCarl Steele, Youthbuild Philadelphia

## B. TIPS FOR APPROACHING MATH

- Use examples of construction-related issues involving math (coordinate with construction staff) or have students list ways they imagine that math is used on the construction site.
- Refer to these lists as the year progresses so they see the practical applications of math.
- Start out teaching students to read a tape measure, an essential skill on the building site.
- Use hands-on practice whenever possible, such as, has them measure everything in sight, cut wood to size, build scale models, and do scale drawings.
- Ask them to come up with ideas on how to practice math skills or how to teach math to others.
- Have advanced students help beginners.
- Use practical examples to reinforce the meaningfulness of the skill.
- Don't measure students' math skills by their ability to read. A student who can perform operations may not be able to handle a word problem.

### *Count the Jelly Beans*

*The ability to "figure it out in your head" and make an educated guess about a math problem is as important as solving complex algebra problems or finding common*

*denominators. Estimating a reasonable approximation of an answer is as valuable in many cases as an exact answer.*

### C. INTRODUCE COMPLEX SKILLS EARLY

One of the reasons math is often so tedious and frustrating for adult learners is because they have never moved beyond basic skills and the linear approach of building one skill upon another. To engage their interest, introduce complex skills early and show the interrelatedness of math concepts.

Example: Introduce a lesson on purchasing site materials by asking students how to figure sales tax. Break down the notion of percent in simple terms, explaining that they pay seven cents on every dollar. Show how this relationship can be written as a fraction ( $7/100$ ), a decimal (.07) or a percent, (seven per every hundred: “cent” meaning “hundred”) and that these are all various forms of saying the same thing. Show students how to figure percents using simple problems.

*TIP: By introducing complex skills early, students who have been stuck reviewing multiplication tables for years will be impressed to see that they can understand concepts that they once thought were insurmountable.*

### D. CALCULATORS ARE OKAY!

Although sometimes perceived as a “crutch,” calculators can give beginning students access to complex math experiences that they never thought possible. Combine practice with basic skills like memorizing multiplication tables and working out real-life problems.

### E. IDEAS FOR MATH EXERCISES

**Estimate First:** Give students the opportunity to estimate their answers before solving problems on paper. This helps them become familiar with math relationships and concepts, and teaches them to check their “exact” answers for reasonableness. Examples: percentage of pay check spent on groceries, time it will take to do a job, amount of carpet to cover a floor, how much money will be left after making a purchase, or the amount of money needed for the group to take a field trip.

**Measure the Room:** To help students learn the connection between abstract math concepts, ask students to estimate the length and width of a room and then, in pairs, to actually get up and measure the floor.

**Make Cardboard Tiles:** When teaching the concept of area, ask students to cut square foot tiles out of cardboard or use floor tiles to lay out a section of the floor so that students can “see” area.

**Draw Floor Areas:** Ask students to draw a picture of a section of the floor, using one-inch scale squares. (If students have mastered measurement, use fractions of an inch to represent a foot.) Have students draw a number of pictures of floors from different areas until they are comfortable with the concept. Then when you are ready to teach students the formula ( $L \times W = A$ ) they will be grounded in concrete physical reality and will understand the significance of the symbols.

**Design Math Problem.** Ask the students to design activities or math problems, by themselves, which could be used by the program with future trainees.

**Stimulating Math Thinking.** Ask students to design real-life problems in which they first estimate their answers, figure with a calculator, and then check with pencil and paper. This approach helps combine conceptual understanding and basic skills.

**Math in Construction.** Involve students in the real-life math problems that come up on the construction site, such as placing an order for plywood or studs. In pairs or small groups, have them figure the materials needed and the cost.

**Use Worksite Problems as “Teachable Moments.”** Ask them if any problems arose that week or coordinate this learning with the site instructors. Trainees can help figure additional materials needed to fix a mistake, or help figure out how to alter formulas.

**Simulate Construction-Math Situations** in the classroom. Play “You Are the Contractor” and do role plays when students have to estimate the materials, costs and time needed to do specific jobs for a client. Have them work in small groups and suggest alternative solutions.

**Help with Youthbuild Math Tasks.** Ask them to work on program math-related tasks, such as calculating the percentage scores on tests, calculating percentage attendance, making graphs and charts depicting percentage or ratios in attendance or lateness.

**Budget for a Meal.** Plan a meal together and figure costs of supplies, purchase food, calculate change, and calculate recipes for different numbers of people.

**Budget for Eating Out.** Go to a restaurant together. Beforehand, get a menu and calculate costs within a budget, including tax and tip.

**Earning Money.** Plan strategies for earning money as a group in order to buy something at the end of the program, put on a graduation party, or go on a trip. Students can investigate things to sell or services to perform in order to make money.

**Play Bingo or Other Games.** Using lively games as team competitions often makes students forget they are practicing important math skills. Examples: (1) Multiplication Bingo, (2) Construction-math problem Jeopardy, (3) matching games, such as matching fractions to their equivalents, fractions to decimals, symbols to words; (4) team competition of drawing a picture involving measurement directions, or (5) estimating the number of jelly beans in a jar.

## 8.4. TEACHING VOCATIONAL SKILLS

Teachers can plan classroom vocational skills training so that it teaches construction skills while reinforcing academic instruction. See the Appendix for a list of tools and equipment for the vocation skills component.

*“I teach the material in class and then we go out and see how it applies on the worksite. I get a set of plans in advance from the construction staff, so I know what they’re going to be working on. We discuss how many sheets of plywood they’re going to need on the job and how many gallons of paint they’re going to use. We practice using tools in class, where students have some time. Every two weeks, I ask students to read a chapter from the local carpenters union’s text on residential print reading. The important thing is actually going to the site. We can talk about stair stringers in class, but when student see it, they really understand why you need certain dimensions, etc. Students need to learn about something and then practice doing it—if they make a mistake they learn it a lot faster than if they never try it out. Site trainers feel that the practical work that I do is an asset, because what participants learn with me reinforces what they’re learning in the field. This moves them along on the site a lot more quickly.”*

-Tommy Bryant, Youthbuild St. Louis

## A. TIPS FOR TEACHING VOCATIONAL SKILLS

- Before teaching, find out what students already know.
- Ask them questions about the material to be covered.
- Ask them to describe experiences they have had with the tools and materials.
- Ask them to give examples or to demonstrate something they know how to do.
- Encourage students to share their prior knowledge.
- Brainstorming possible solutions to problems.
- Encouraging guessing and questions.
- Praise students for the knowledge they bring with them.
- Praise them for sharing that knowledge.
- Tell students what will be taught and why it is important that they know this information.
- Give a variety of examples from real work situations.
- Ask students to describe situations in which they have seen these skills used and invite speakers to discuss the relevance of skills to the workplace.

## B. CLEAR ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES

Students need clear objectives to mark their progress. Establish measurable competencies in advance and establish as benchmark skills, only those that will be taught thoroughly. Tell students the benchmark expectations in clear, specific language, and then establish a specific timeframe. Prepare students for the deadline. Mark or chart progress in folders, on wall charts, and in regular evaluation sessions.

## C. PRE-ASSESS STUDENT SKILLS

In order to guide instruction in class and on the site, develop tools that assess the existing student skills. Then, design assessment tools that correspond to skills to be taught, then measure only those skills. Be sure to measure skill knowledge, not reading ability, by using various strategies depending on student needs, e.g., manual demonstration, verbal description, and problem-solving simulations.

To allay student nervousness about evaluations, explain that the initial skill assessment is not to pass or fail students or to judge their knowledge, but to determine what students already know and what they need to know so you can plan the curriculum. Keep students informed of the results of the assessment, and praise any knowledge demonstrated and praise effort. If students fail at first, downplay poor results, assure students that they will learn the material, and remind them that the information will be taught in a way that will allow them to improve.

*The student who has difficulty reading or comprehending written directions may have well-developed visual acuity or good eye-hand coordination.*

## D. HANDS-ON SKILL PRACTICE

Learning takes place best in a classroom environment that is safe, comfortable, and potentially more supportive than the worksite. Hands-on practice has several advantages: (1) Facilitates a focus on accuracy rather than speed, and allows for mistakes and more focused concentration, (2) Permits expression of a wide variety of learning strengths in the classroom, and (3) Does not cater to or single out the better readers or the more academically experienced.

***SUGGESTIONS FOR HANDS-ON SKILL PRACTICE:***

- Reinforce the current worksite learning by practicing, discussing, and reading about it in class.
- Make repeated references to the site work when it applies to in-class instruction.
- Use clear language and divide content into manageable parts, so as not to overload beginners.
- Give specific step-by-step instructions when telling students to perform a task.
- Repeat these instructions frequently and ask students to repeat them.
- Demonstration is a powerful teaching tool to ensure that students have seen how to do a task, heard explanations of how to do it, and practiced what they have learned.
- Whenever possible, have students work in teams on the site and in the classroom.
- Give teams problems to solve together with “team scores;” not individual competitions.
- By having students work in small groups, they will learn the importance of communication and it will foster both leadership and mutual responsibility.

*The amount of time spent allowing students to practice will pay off in the long run. Costly mistakes can be avoided and student confidence will build.*

**E. INTEGRATING ACADEMICS, DEMONSTRATION, AND HANDS-ON PRACTICE**

Students are more likely to perform tasks well and remember how to do them if the academic skill building (especially reading, writing and math) is integrated and reinforced with hands-on practice. Examples:

- Present students with a problem. For example: “We have to nail this vertical stud to this horizontal stud. The horizontal stud is already nailed to the floor. How can we do it?”
- Ask students for suggestions to solve the problem. Students may try to do it and may or may not succeed. Discuss what worked and what didn’t and why.
- Have students read instructions for performing the task. Ask them to explain the instructions in their own words and practice following them either individually, in small groups or as a class.
- Demonstrate by performing the task correctly and describing what is being done. (“In order to adequately support the vertical stud, we need to toe-nail it to the horizontal stud, like this. To ‘toe-nail’ means to hammer it at an angle through both the vertical and the horizontal stud.”) Show how to do it. Draw a picture on the blackboard if it is helpful. Explain when to use this technique and why it works best in this situation.
- Review what has been taught by asking trainees to describe the technique in their own words, and explain the situations in which it would be used. (“What is this technique called? When would it be used? How is it done?”)
- Have students practice the skill until they perform it correctly.
- Work with individuals who are doing it incorrectly until they can do it independently.
- Ask students who have mastered the skill to help others.
- Have students write about the task, such as instructions, reflections on their learning in a journal, or developing questions about additional information they would like to have.

*"Because our students come to us with little or no experience, with regular work, citizenship, or stable family life, we start with the experience of work, from which we draw out the academic lessons."*

-John Briscoe, Visions Youthworks, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

## F. ASSESSMENT OF VOCATIONAL SKILLS

- Assess student progress on a regular basis.
- Provide opportunities for students' self-assessment in participation, attendance, and skills.
- Allow students to set goals for future participation and future learning.
- Assess informally each day, observing and making mental notes of who needs help.
- Work with students until they have mastered the skill or the information until they learn it.
- Every day ask students to demonstrate skills they learned that day.
- When formally assessing student skills, tell students in advance, give them time for review, and assess only those skills that have been taught.
- Test for skill knowledge, not reading ability.
- When testing acquisition of construction skills, combine demonstration and written tests.
- Use the results of the assessments to plan future teaching, not to grade students.



G. Measurement Skills Assessment: see Appendix 12, Chapter 8

## 8.5. PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE GED

### A. FACTORS IN TEACHING THE GED

- Can be integrated into curriculum that teaches reading, writing, and thinking skills.
- Can be incorporated into a theme-based curriculum by exploring a topic in depth and simultaneously develop the reading, writing, and thinking skills needed to pass the test.
- Teaching the GED critically can involve realistic self-assessment and goal planning, as well as teaching critical evaluation of the nature and limitations of testing.
- Can be used with alternative methods of evaluation and self-assessment.
- Students may gravitate towards the workbooks because they are familiar.

### *DILEMMA IN USING THE GED*

Passing the GED test provides students with entry into many jobs or college, as well as providing a sense of satisfaction and mastery for students. On the other hand, the GED is somewhat inflexible and limited as both a teaching and assessment tool. Because of the wide range of skill levels in Youthbuild students, only some students may be ready to study for the GED. With these issues in mind, teachers must ask the following questions:

1. To whom should GED instruction be geared?

2. How can GED preparation be taught so that students are prepared for the test but not restrained by its limitations?
3. When and how is it best to prepare students for the test?

## B. LIMITATIONS OF THE GED

Teaching that relies solely on GED workbooks is insufficient. Skills measured by the GED are limited.

The GED validates the misconception that there is a right and a wrong answer to every question, and that all learning is quantifiable and objectively measurable. (Youthbuild students need both real-life reading materials (newspapers, driver's manuals, informational brochures, dictionaries, reference books, and application forms), as well as becoming acquainted with forms of good literature.). Passing the GED may give students the misperception that they are finished learning. Only one section, the essay, asks students to demonstrate important synthesis skills. Students must be taught that it is possible to pass the GED and still not possess broader life-skills.

This chapter provides a concise overview of the test's contents and purpose, to clarify the ways this content can be taught using a variety of materials and approaches. This chapter also discusses the limitations of standardized tests in general and the GED in particular. How to integrate GED instruction into the classroom in a manner that engenders critical thinking and respects the diversity of the student population is discussed.

## C. ASSESSING THE READINESS OF STUDENTS FOR THE GED

Frequently, adult education programs, including Youthbuild, use standardized tests like the TABE or the ABLE to arrive at a grade level equivalency for each student. This rough data is useful in deciding whether or not students should be preparing for the GED.

You can also give students the GED practice test, regardless of reading comprehension, ability, or experience. The practice test, which includes the five GED sections and takes four hours and 10 minutes, can be a fairly good predictor of actual test scores.

Replicate the testing environment as closely as possible so that students are prepared for taking a seven-hour exam. They should be required to take the entire test in a four-hour setting with no interruptions. Tell students that their scores should be well above the required passing score to feel confident about passing the test. Students should be shown how tests are scored, the difference one point can make, the differences between forms of the test, the time period involved, and the importance of paying close attention to time.

Before giving the practice test, do a combination of individualized assessment and standardized testing. Make a judgment based on grade level equivalency from a standardized test, ability to handle difficult reading, think critically, concentrate for long periods of time, and show math and writing competency. If the practice test is given inappropriately, students might take a test that will be frustrating and demoralizing, and will contribute to feelings of failure. Use the following assessments as a guide:

**Beginner** students (grade equivalent reading scores of 0 - 4.0 on a standardized reading test) show difficulty in basic reading, writing, and math skills in individual assessments. The GED practice test is not appropriate.

**Advanced Beginner** students (scores of 4.0 - 6.0) show some difficulty with reading comprehension, writing, and math skills in individual assessments. These students probably would be discouraged by the GED practice test, but they might take one section to see what it involves. They should work in pre-GED work texts, if the work texts are not too frustrating and they can achieve some measure of success. They need skill-building practice and development of thinking skills at an appropriate level.

**Intermediate** students (score of 6.0 - 8.0) demonstrate an intermediate level of reading comprehension, math, and writing ability in individual assessments. In addition, they show a reasonable amount of self-discipline and ability to concentrate. This student still needs more practice. Higher-level students may want to study for the GED, but a low score may be discouraging enough to keep them from persisting.

**Ready-for-GED** students (score of 8.0 or above) display skill in all areas on individual assessments and are highly motivated. For example, the ability to independently read, summarize, and evaluate a full-length adult novel indicates the level of both literal comprehension and conceptual skill needed. Students who can produce a thorough research paper based on three sources also demonstrate GED-level comprehension and thinking skills. They can take the GED practice test to identify areas that need further study. They can also use GED study materials, along with a wide variety of other high-interest, comprehension-building materials.

If students take the practice test, you can follow up by discussing feelings, fears, and expectations. Review individual tests with individual students, discussing the problems and noting specific types of questions requiring further work. Then develop a specific plan for each student, allowing a certain period daily for practice. When ready, they can take another practice test. Recommend that students take the full-length test only after they get the “minimum average” on each section of the practice test. The real test is longer and requires more patience, and these factors alone may affect their scores. The GED test is 7 hours and 35 minutes long. It can be a frustrating experience for students.

*“I entered Youthbuild with 7th grade reading skills. It was harder to get a GED. I wasn’t used to timed questions, trying to do grammar, and that sort of thing. Getting my GED has definitely made a difference. With my two girls—one of them is finishing fifth grade now—I felt like I couldn’t ask her to do something I hadn’t done—finish school. But now, she can do it because mommy’s done it. My mom is my mentor because she is going to school too. She lives in a senior building, and she is going to school attending computer classes. I believe we help each other.”*

—Sandell Johnson, graduate, Youthbuild Philadelphia

## D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GED PREPARATION PROCESS

Before the students begin any studying, carefully work with them to examine the test. Young people come into the classroom with fears, misconceptions, ideas, and false expectations about the GED test. In order to begin a critical appraisal of the test, it is important to actively engage students in discussion, reflective writing, debates, and research projects that address some of the following questions:

- What are your expectations of the test?
- What have others told you about the test?
- Which skills does the GED test measure and not measure?
- What kinds of reading skills and knowledge are needed to pass the test?
- What kinds of skills can and cannot be demonstrated in a multiple-choice format?
- How much are the passages on the GED like actual reading, writing, and math that we do in daily life? In college? On the job?
- What “grade level” is the test written on and what does that mean?
- What does “norm” mean and how is it determined?

- What does “standardized” mean, and what are its limitations?
- How much of the test do you have to get right in order to pass?
- What factors might affect the scores people get on the test?
- What problem-solving and research skills does the test measure?
- What is the benefit in passing the GED?
- What is the symbolic value of passing or not passing the GED?

## E. TEACHING SKILLS ON THE TEST

Low-skill students can benefit from GED instruction, if the focus is on the concepts and not on high-level comprehension. Use other materials appropriate for skill levels, and make a connection between GED skills and the materials used. Otherwise, students will not necessarily be convinced of the connection and may continue to want to work from GED books even if they are too difficult. Be explicit and explain that GED thinking skills are being developed along with reading comprehension. Students need opportunities to become familiar with the multiple choice format, so give them opportunities to work daily with GED or Pre-GED workbooks.

## F. FOSTERING RESPECT

Explain that everyone in the class will be reading on different levels and that students can learn from each other. If the GED is the only and ultimate goal in the class, it can be very discouraging to students who need a great deal of initial reading skill work and it can also give a false impression of “superiority” to high level readers. Demonstrate to students that there are valid measures of skill other than standardized tests. For example, asking students to record, document, and write about what they read can be a powerful way to demonstrate reading growth. It can also provide a sense of achievement for students whose comprehension skills are still too low to take the GED. Other achievement markers might include successfully completing a unit, completing a pre-GED workbook section, completing a project, or completing a set number of books.

## G. KEY COMPONENTS OF THE GED EXAMINATION

Become well acquainted with the test before beginning to assist students. Students also need to understand what is involved in the test. Share the following information with them as part of a larger discussion of the GED benefits and limitations. It is often described as a “reading test,” but it calls for particular kinds of reading skills and requires prior knowledge of various concepts. The test includes questions that can be classified according to Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives and that involve the measurement of the skills described below.

**Comprehension Skills:** The ability to restate information, summarize ideas, and identify implications. All questions have a comprehension foundation.

**Application Skills:** The ability to use given or remembered ideas in a context different from the one provided.

**Analysis Skills:** The ability to (1) distinguish facts from hypotheses and opinions, (2) recognize unstated assumptions, (3) distinguish a conclusion from supporting statements, and (4) identify cause and effect relationships.

**Synthesis Skills:** The ability to produce information in the form of hypotheses, theories, stories, or compositions. The essay test is classified at the synthesis level.

**Evaluation Skills:** The ability to (1) assess the adequacy or appropriateness of data to substantiate hypotheses, conclusions, or generalizations, (2) recognize the role that values play

in beliefs and decision-making, (3) assess the accuracy of facts as determined by documentation or proof; and (4) indicate logical fallacies in arguments.

### *SUBJECT AREA COMPONENTS OF THE GED TEST*

The new 2002 GED Test series consist of five subtests, each measuring the major skills considered to be the outcome of a high school education:

**Language Arts, Reading:** The Reading subtest questions will assess comprehension, application, analysis and synthesis. Most of the questions will reflect higher order and critical thinking skills. Content areas are defined by the type of texts: Literary and Nonfiction. Included are comparison/contrast, business document, and visual representation questions.

65 minutes

Literary Texts 75%

- Poetry
- Drama
- Prose Fiction

Nonfiction 25%

- Prose
- Critical Reviews
- Workplace & Community Documents

**Science Section:** The Science test questions are drawn from life science; earth science; space science; physical science (physics and chemistry); focus on environmental and health topics such as recycling, heredity, disease prevention, pollution, climate; and on science's relevance to everyday life. Assessments are based on conceptual understanding, problem solving and graphic stimuli.

80 minutes

- Life Science 45%
- Physical Science (Chemistry & Physics) 35%
- Earth & Space Sciences 20%

**Social Studies Section:** The candidate must demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse and democratic society in an interdependent world. The Social Studies subtest will assess comprehension, application, analysis and evaluation. It covers national and global materials. Practical document(s) such as voters' guides or tax forms may be used. Excerpt(s) are used from the U.S. Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Federalist Papers, or landmark Supreme Court cases also may be used.

70 minutes

- Economics 20%
- Geography 15%
- Civics & Government 25%
- Natural History 25%
- World History 15%

**Language Arts, Writing:** The questions on the Writing subtest are intended to assess the ability on sentence structure, usage, organization and mechanics. Business communications

documents such as letters and reports are used. “How to” passages such as dressing for success, leasing a car, planning a trip may also be used. Skills including transitions, text divisions, topic sentences, and unity/coherence are also used to measure writing skills. An essay portion is included and must be passed to satisfactorily complete the writing subtest.

Part I: Multiple Choice (75 minutes)

- Mechanics 25%
- Usage 30%
- Sentence Structure 30%
- Organization 15%
- Part II: Essay (45 minutes)
- Plan, draft, revise and write an essay

**Mathematics Section:** The Mathematics subtest includes assessments in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, number relations, data analysis, statistics, probability and set-up questions where candidates must identify correct ways to solve problems. Charts, graphs and tables are also included. All candidates will be issued the Casio fx 260 Solar Calculator by the test center for Part I of the subtest.

Part I (45 minutes) Calculator Use

Part II (45 minutes) No Calculator

- Number Operations & Number Sense 25%
- Measurement & Geometry 25%
- Data Analysis, Statistics & Probability 25%

## H. AFTER THE TEST

After students have taken the actual GED test, help them interpret the test results and discuss their feelings, fears, and expectations. If students pass, be prepared with a post-GED study plan, which might include college-career track research and investigation, tutoring others, continuing their subject area studies, or taking a specially designed course to develop their skills.

Recognize their success with graduation and award ceremonies, preferable in front of family and friends. Reserve a classroom wall for photos of graduates or framed copies of the GEDs of former students. In this way, students know that when they succeed they will receive a permanent place on the classroom wall of students who persisted to success.

If students fail, they need specialized support to continue until they succeed, which can happen in three ways: (1) Students remain full-time in the program until they succeed, even if this is full-time unpaid classroom time, (2) For those who are already in jobs, sign up for a part-time evening or weekend GED tutorial, best given by one of the teachers the students already know, or (3) Placing students in an outside program for continuation of GED preparation after graduation. This last approach is the least likely to work unless the GED teacher in the other program is truly outstanding. It is very difficult to start over with a new teacher at this stage.



## 9. Evaluation

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1. Overview
2. Evaluating Student Performance
3. Evaluating Teaching Performance
4. Evaluation Forms: See Appendix 12 Chapter 9
  - a. Biweekly Evaluation (by instructors)
  - b. Biweekly Self- Evaluation (by students)
  - c. Student Assessment of Teachers
  - d. End-of-Program Student Self-Assessment
  - e. End-of-Program Student Evaluation of Education Program

### 9.1. OVERVIEW

*Evaluations are for learning how to do things better. They are tools for being a lifelong learner.*

Regular assessments by staff, as well as self-assessments by students, help them to know if they are on track. Regular benchmarks can give them a sense of progress and achievement. At the same time, assessments give teachers and program directors important information in managing a Youthbuild program. This information helps staff and students to plan activities.

- Types of Youthbuild Evaluations
- Student Progress
- Teaching Effectiveness
- Program Effectiveness

### INSTALL EVALUATION SYSTEMS EARLY

Once framing questions have been identified, systems for collecting data to respond to the questions need to be developed and put into place. In order to develop appropriate data collection systems, indicators must be identified that measure progress or success related to the framing questions. For example, to respond to the question, "How will learning be assessed," the evaluator must determine what type of measurable change would occur in a student that would reflect learning in that student. Change can be recorded using both quantitative and qualitative measures. For example, a 15% improvement in numerical test scores can be a quantitative measure of change. Similarly, an improvement in public speaking skills could be a qualitative measure of a trainee's progress. The objectives established for the education component can be measured in similar ways. Once the indicators of progress have been established, efficient systems to collect data such as questionnaires, assessment tests, attendance logs, progress reports, an MIS database, and interview procedures must be put into place well before data starts being generated. If systems are not implemented before program activity, important data can be lost at the outset that might compromise the evaluation.

### *WHAT YOU NEED FOR AN INDIVIDUAL OR PROGRAM EVALUATION*

- The Purpose
- Who Needs the Information
- How the Information Will be Used
- Decisions That Might be Made on the Basis of the Evaluation
- How Data Will be Collected
- Who Participates in Collecting and Analyzing Data
- How Information Will be Documented and Communicated
- Who Will Receive the Results
- What Will Happen to Lessons Learned

### **DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION**

To determine the purpose of an evaluation, first decide who or what will be evaluated and how that information will be used. Is the data needed to satisfy a funder? Will the data be used to improve program operation? Has the board of directors requested the information to make organizational decisions? Is the evaluation data needed for instructional purposes for use with trainees? Can an evaluation procedure be used that will satisfy the needs of these various stakeholders?

The purpose of the evaluation will determine whether a formative approach will be used to generate ongoing feedback or whether a summative approach will be used to gather final outcome or impact data. Typically, the most useful assessment data in a Youthbuild education program is usually the ongoing information to help teachers and trainees to improve both student performance and the academic program effectiveness. Determining who will be evaluated and by what means is a critical step in an effective evaluation. Equally important is deciding who will conduct the evaluation and analyze the findings.

Early in the program, it is crucial to instill in both staff and trainees a willingness to participate in formal and informal assessments. The goal should be to cultivate a program-wide atmosphere, which is open and supportive of evaluation, reflection, and change. Mini evaluations should be done weekly on:

1. Worksite skills for safety, cooperation, learning and construction
2. Classroom skills for assignments, completed work, quality and quantity

The scale should be similar to other evaluation processes. Some students may resent the evaluation process. Find ways to increase their tolerance of evaluations through awards, certificates or even monetary rewards.

Staff and trainees can learn how to play the role of evaluator responsibly and can learn to welcome feedback on their own performance.

## **9.2. EVALUATING STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

1. Student Assessment Strategies
2. Student Evaluation Techniques
3. When You Schedule an Evaluation
4. Before the Evaluation: Review the Skills
5. Teaching Self-Assessment Techniques

6. Guidelines for Student Evaluations
7. Assessments during Weekly Staff Meetings
8. Appendices:
9. Types of Tools for Evaluating Student Performance
10. End-of-Program Student Self-Assessment

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Effective staffing of the education program requires someone on staff to be well versed in student assessment. Student assessments should be administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the program cycle, and include academic, vocational, and career assessments. It can also include traditional and non-traditional assessments as discussed in the Appendix: Types of Tools for Evaluating Student Performance.

## STUDENT EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

Having an effective education staff requires that they evaluate student progress and share these evaluations with students in ways that help the students manage their own progress. To evaluate how students are learning, it is recommended that teachers develop individual portfolios that will include the following:

- Assessment results
- Awards, certificates, and honors received
- Samples of students' written work, presentations, and math projects
- Competencies gained over the program cycle
- Letters or commendations and reports from other Youthbuild staff

These student portfolios can help assess the progress of each student, as well as give the program markers for the success of the education program.

The groundwork for effective evaluation is laid in the planning phase of the Youthbuild program. When program planners first sit down to outline the program's goals and objectives, they are establishing the criteria by which the program will later be evaluated. The common questions that arise during this planning phase are many of the same questions that frame the evaluation process:

- What students are being targeted for the Youthbuild program?
- How will these students be recruited, screened, and selected?
- What should these students learn?
- How will their academic needs be assessed?
- How will their learning be assessed?
- What will be the curriculum and how will it be taught?
- How will the classroom be organized and managed?
- Will the classroom design be conducive to discipline and learning?
- Will the work site design be conducive to discipline and learning?

### WHEN YOU SCHEDULE AN EVALUATION:

- Tell everyone involved exactly what is being evaluated.
- Why the evaluation is being conducted.
- What will be done with the information?
- Look at strengths and give suggestions for improvement.

In preparing young people for performance assessments, it is important to relate their willingness to participate in evaluations to the process of becoming a life-long learner. Trainees need to understand that effective learners use performance assessment as an important source of information. Documenting and spotlighting success is one of the most important reasons to evaluate performance. Assessments should be both qualitative and quantitative. What kind of measurable change could demonstrate to an outside person that learning has occurred?

### BEFORE THE EVALUATION: REVIEW THE SKILLS

- The need to continually review and reinforce previous learning for students cannot be overstated.
- Review at the beginning of each session what was learned previous that day.
- Review at the beginning of each session what was learned the day before.
- Review at the end of each session what was learned that day.
- Devise lessons which incorporate known skills.
- Devise lessons which incorporate known skills in new ways.
- Divide students into “study groups” and teach them review strategies.
- Have students teach others.
- Have students demonstrate skills to each other.
- Have students write and give review quizzes.
- Have students write directions for manual skill work.

### TEACHING SELF-ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

A good way to begin familiarizing trainees with the evaluation process is to teach self-assessment techniques, such as personal journals, that prompt students to reflect on their own experiences. Use student self-evaluations as a tool to track progress and outcomes. Students can contribute both written and oral evaluations of the program on a regular basis. For example, alternate representatives of the student body to attend bi-monthly evaluation sessions, or have all students complete end-of-the-year questionnaires.

Consider using an evaluation tool that involves students in the evaluation process while teaching academic and leadership skills. The National Center for Service Learning in Early Adolescence has developed such a tool called Student Evaluators: A Guide to Implementation. It involves a “process by which students, with the help of a facilitator, develop a research design, collect data, tabulate results, and offer recommendations for the future of the program.”

Student Evaluators are available from:

The National Center for Service Learning in Early Adolescence  
Center for Advanced Study in Education  
Graduate School and University Center  
of the City University of New York

25 West 43rd Street, Suite 612  
 New York, NY 10036-8099  
 (212) 642-2946

*Evaluate comes from a French word that means “to value.”*

## GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Formal evaluations can be extremely stressful for trainees, who may associate the term with psychological evaluations or substance abuse assessments. Even informal assessments of a trainee’s performance can be threatening to a young person who is not well prepared to receive feedback. Explain that assessment is a learning tool for redesigning their programs. Frame the evaluations as tools that can help students and staff together to plan the future. To alleviate their anxiety, explain the evaluation process.

Involve students in designing an evaluation and then compare it to the existing forms. Ask them to offer suggestions. Remind them that program evaluations are useful for funders and boards, as well as everyone who is directly involved on a daily basis. Involving them will help create a sense of ownership of the program and facilitate the development of analytical skills.

## GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT ASSESSMENTS

***Make Expectations Explicit.*** Determine what skills and behaviors must be demonstrated, how often students will be assessed, how well they will be expected to perform tasks, and within what time frame.

***Make Outcomes Explicit.*** Be explicit about the expected outcomes. What will happen if expectations are exceeded or not met? Decide how recognition for completion will be demonstrated, and determine what approach will be taken if expectations are not met.

***Follow-through on Final Evaluations and Recognition.*** Decide who will follow through on recognition, consequences, and commitments to make change based on the evaluation findings.

Classroom Tools for Assessing Trainees

## ASSESSMENTS DURING WEEKLY STAFF MEETINGS.

Conduct ongoing evaluation during their weekly staff meetings. Decide early in the program on a specific list of questions to ask at each meeting, as reminders of what you are assessing. These assessments can evaluate curriculum as well as logistics of the program. A formal evaluation of the program can be done at the end of each program.

### 9.3. ASSESSING TEACHING PERFORMANCE

In addition to the periodic evaluations conducted by the program managers, teachers can utilize a variety of ways to see if they are on track, and to learn ways to improve teaching performance. They will usually have quarterly evaluation meetings with the director.

Students can also be asked to informally and formally assess the performance of the teachers, the education component, and the entire program. Always include individual or group interviews because many trainees may not express their opinions in any detail in a written evaluation. This approach provides a good model for lifelong learning—telling students that everyone is both a learner and a teacher.

Just like the students, the teachers can check their own teaching performance and techniques informally in weekly meetings with their colleagues and with their supervisor in formal quarterly performance evaluations.

Students can also evaluate teacher performance at the end of the program. A form for the student evaluation of teachers can be found in the Part I: Managing a Youthbuild Program, under the Assessment Forms section.

#### 9.4. EVALUATION FORMS See Appendix 12, Chapter 9



1. Biweekly Evaluation (for students)
2. Biweekly Self-Evaluation (by instructors)
3. Student Evaluation of Teachers
4. End-of-Program Student Self-Assessment (See Appendix)
5. End-of-Program Teacher Evaluation of Education Program