Sample Implications for Our Work with Youth

Ages 5-8

Physical

- Don't plan projects that require fine details or perfection.
- Activities need to be just that–ACTIVE!
- Provide opportunities to practice and improve skills–both small muscles (pencils) and large muscles (ball catching, balloon volleyball) that can be active and fun.
- Focus on projects that are easy to complete.

Social

- Do all you can to encourage parental involvement in all activities
- An adult leader may be viewed as a surrogate parent
- Disputes may happen but will rarely have long-lasting effects
- Small group activities are most effective with this age group

Emotional

- Focus on cooperative games in which every child "wins." Focus on teamwork
- Find ways to identify and celebrate success "I did it all by myself!"
- When an activity fails, you can help children by interpreting the reasons why
- Do not follow the practice of "awarding" competitive ribbons at this age
- Encourage discussions of "fairness" and provide opportunities to practice it

Intellectual

- Will be more likely to continue fiddling with a project rather than completing it.
- Reading to this group is effective and enjoyed by this age group
- Design projects that are linear–don't expect "multi-tasking" from children
- Provide activities that center on the doing, not the end result
- Provide activities that appeal to the senses–touch, taste, smell, feel, sight
- Collecting activities and projects have high appeal to this age group
- Don't just give verbal instructions for activities but rather SHOW how to do each step
- Have a variety of options available for those who learn at different rates

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Sample Implications for Our Work with Youth

Ages 9-12

Physical

- Activities should include lots of physical involvement and activity
- Vary activities to meet the diverse needs of this growing group–don't rely solely on sports activities
- Avoid competitions between boys and girls–mix your groups
- Projects should focus on making and doing–things that can be seen and handled
- Focus on developing fine motor skills at this age

Social

- Clubs are popular with this age group–so build on it and focus on their interest in collecting–bugs, coins, rocks, stamps, ball cards, etc
- Offer opportunities for youth to explore leadership skills
- Plan plenty of time for these youth to be in same-gender groups
- Let youth take a larger role in planning and running activities and provide support in carrying out the plans
- Clarify and enforce reasonable limits for this age group

Emotional

- Provide discipline or correction quietly, one-on-one, in a caring and consistent manner
- Expect responsibility from each youth
- Give positive feedback to the efforts and successes you see
- Avoid generic praise–they will see through it and feel you are trying to manipulate them
- Take a real interest in each young person
- Never play favorites. Help youth identify their own successes
- Provide the safety net of an adult who will maintain boundaries and safety

Intellectual

- Provide opportunities to set two or three goals for a 6-month period
- Hands-on activities are still popular with this age group
- Focus on environmental preservation efforts in the community

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Sample Implications for Our Work with Youth

Ages 13-15

Physical

- Allow for individual differences in ability when completing a project
- Listen to their fears and worries about their physical development without judging or trivializing
- Be patient with grooming behaviors that seem excessive
- Plan activities that do not depend on physical prowess. Emphasize fine motor skills

Social

- Provide activities to be with the opposite sex in healthy ways planning groups, parties, fund-raising activities, etc
- Encourage involvement in teen councils and planning boards
- Involve the group in setting rules for the group or the program
- Find time to talk with youth individually to help them deal with concerns
- Provide opportunities to get involved in civic and environmental activities

Emotional

- Plan activities that do no compare one youth with another
- Do not use "put-downs" or "in the face" behaviors with them
- Encourage youth to be supportive of one another and their work
- Give them a chance to choose when and if they are to be "front and center"
- Avoid singling them out in front of others to either commend or criticize
- Provide lots of opportunities to learn new skills; allow many choices

Intellectual

- Plan activities that require some length of time to complete
- Ask questions to encourage predicting and problem-solving: "What if this doesn't work?" or "What else could happen?"
- Offer more complex games or activities and develop abstract thinking skills
- Let them serve as junior leaders or assistants
- Involve them in decision-making roles by giving them a significant say in what goes on, what rules are established, and questioning ways of doing things

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Sample Implications for Our Work with Youth

Ages 16-18

Physical

- Provide some experiences around body image, etiquette, grooming, hair styles, health and fitness
- Avoid comments that criticize or compare stature, size, or shape
- Realistic physical challenges can be part of activities and projects

Social

- Provide opportunities to talk about their own beliefs
- Involve them in service groups and community service activities
- Provide activities that allow them to test out their interactions with members of the opposite sex–trips, dances, work groups, etc
- Social activities that include adults are appropriate
- Encourage individual goal setting and self-responsibility
- Provide opportunities for them to plan their own programs
- Involve this age group in more leadership roles–tutoring, coaching, leading groups, speaking to community groups, mentoring younger groups
- As a leader, you should be more of an advisor than director

Emotional

- Plan activities that allow teens to try different roles
- Be willing to be wrong; the group will not put you on a pedestal
- Give them opportunities to prove their ability to be responsible
- Encourage group decision-making when feasible. Accept unique approaches

Intellectual

- Involve them in carrying out their plans. Eliminate "busy work"
- Plan group time during which they can discuss ideas and abstract concepts
- Encourage global thinking with local action
- Offer vocational and career exploration opportunities
- Support their interest in political issues and causes
- Career Days/College Days interest this group–offer a wide range of options
- Find internships that lead to skill-specific career interests

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