

Making It Count:

Strategies for Increasing Meaningful Youth Engagement in Extension Work

Shannon J. Horrillo, Statewide 4-H Director
Fe Moncloa, 4-H Youth Development Advisor

Meaningful Youth Engagement can be defined as involving youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with the opportunity for planning and/or decision-making affecting others...

National Commission on Resources for Youth, 1974

Meaningful Youth Engagement means:

- 1 Young people have opportunities to participate in decision-making
- 2 Young people have opportunities to develop and practice leadership
- 3 Young people experience a sense of belonging
- 4 Young people and adults are working together, with both groups sharing equally in the decision-making (i.e., Youth-Adult Partnerships)

Community Network for Youth Development (2001); Gambone, Klem, & Connell (2002); Hart (1992); National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002)

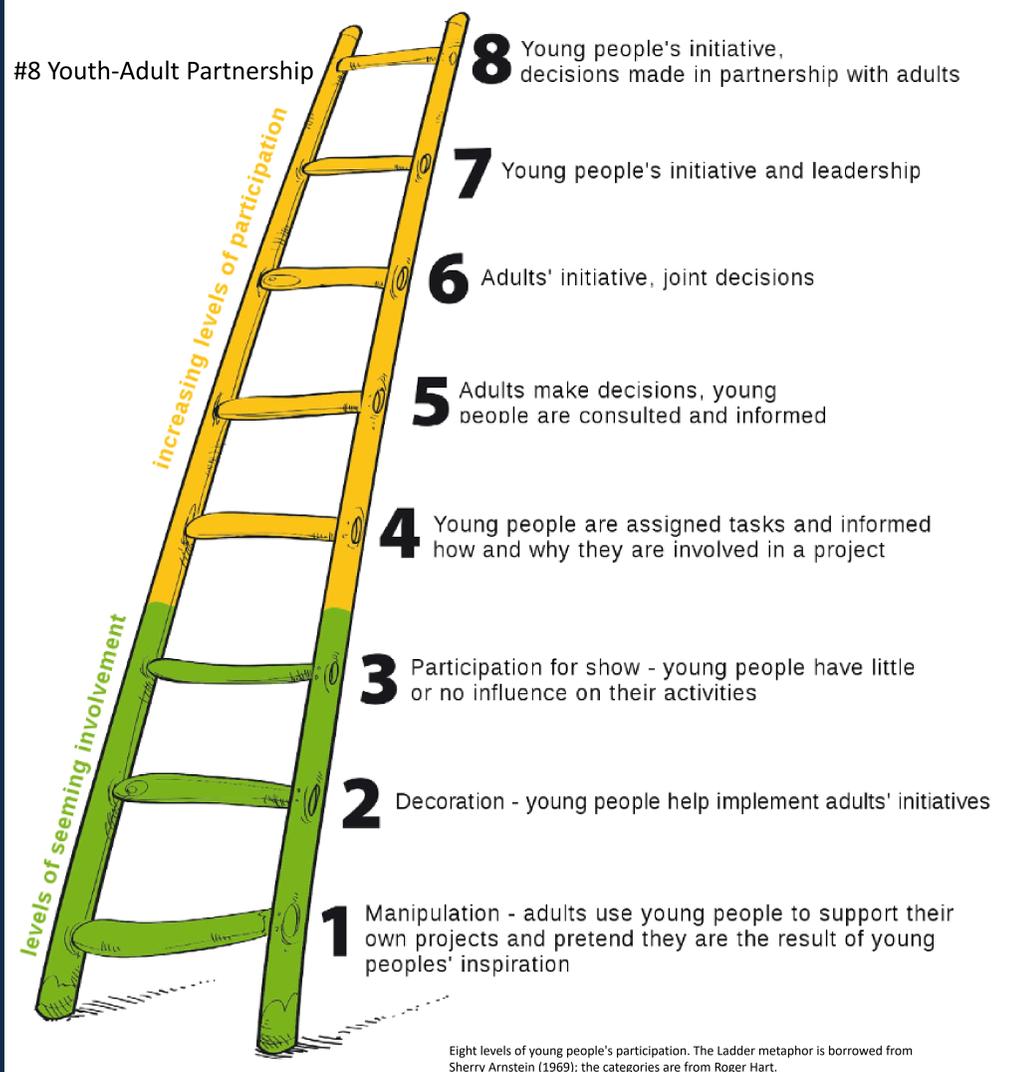
Signs of Youth Engagement

- ✓ Youth interests are reflected in the program
- ✓ Youth are involved in stating goals/needs
- ✓ Youth are involved in activity/program planning and evaluation
- ✓ Youth-led activities
- ✓ Youth are peer trainers, teachers, advocates, or counselors
- ✓ Youth train, recruit, and support each other
- ✓ Youth are involved in civic/social justice movements
- ✓ Youth hold positions of power in the program (e.g., youth in governance, youth on boards)
- ✓ Youth have fun and are excited to be a part of the activity, program, or agency
- ✓ Youth report feeling valued and respected as partners in the agency

Reflection Questions

- Think about the last time you worked with youth.
- Where do you think the program/activity was on the ladder?
- What two strategies would help you move up the ladder?

The Ladder of Youth Participation



Extension work has the greatest impact on positive youth development when young people are fully engaged in the program

