

TAKE ACTION

Session 23

90 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Youth will consider different forms of action for sharing their findings and recommendations, and think about how those forms of action fit within the larger social action landscape.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION:

- Butcher paper, tape, and markers.
- Paper, pens, and clipboards.
- A sheet of butcher paper with three columns labeled *Advocacy, Activism, and Education*.
- A large piece of butcher paper labeled with the *Taking Action: Some Approaches to Social Change* chart (Master Copy 3.23a) with the definition spaces blank.
- Review *Action Strategy Identification Chart Example* (Master Copy 3.23b).
- Copy the *Action Strategy Identification Chart* (Master Copy 3.23c) before the session: one copy for each participant or make a poster.
- Six sticky notes for each participant.
- Copy and cut *Forms of Action* (Master Copy 3.23d) and place the individual slips of paper labeled with different actions in a paper or cloth bag.
- Sticker dots.

I. OPENING: ATTENDANCE, SNACKS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AGENDA OVERVIEW (5 MINUTES)

Opening Circle Statement (Around the World): Someone I admire and why...

II. WARM UP: FOUR CORNERS (15 MINUTES)

Write the words Agree, Disagree, Somewhat Agree, and Somewhat Disagree on four pieces of paper, and post each at a different corner of the room. Ask youth and adult staff and volunteers to listen to the following statements and then stand under the sign that BEST reflects how they feel. This part works best if it is done in silence. Debrief by discussing that even within one set of goals (like your campaign), different audiences will respond to different strategies depending on their interests, personal perspectives, and experiences.

Use the following statements, or pick your own:

Advocacy, Activism, and Education: Round Robin



- I think people are born with equal opportunities to succeed.
- I think everyone should go to college.
- I think that adults generally respect youth.
- I like to share what I know and think with others.
- I just want to DO something!
- I like to persuade other people to see things my way.

III. ADVOCACY, ACTIVISM AND EDUCATOR BRAINSTORM (10 MINUTES)

Discuss the difference between a recommendation and an action. An action is a stepping stone or strategy to make a recommendation happen. This session is about thinking through the stepping stones (or actions).

Step 1: Brainstorm different approaches to action. Share with youth that many of these approaches can fit into the categories of advocacy, activism, and education. For YELL definitions see the *Taking Action: Some Approaches to Social Change* chart (Master Copy 3.23a). Write these categories as column headings along the top of a board or easel paper. Ask youth to name what a person who does each of these things is called (e.g. advocate, activist, educator or teacher).

Step 2: In pairs, ask youth to define each approach and list some of the things that a person who takes that approach does or says. Include ideas from the initial

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Example:

Approach	Advocacy	Activism	Education	Other
What is it?				
Person	Advocate	Activist	Educator	Other
What do they do or say?				

brainstorm of approaches to action. Have them write down their responses on sticky notes or index cards, and tape or post them under the appropriate category. Make sure youth have plenty of time to write before posting begins, as this will encourage a wider variety of answers.

Step 3: Review the sticky notes and group them according to theme. Based on the brainstorm, develop a final definition for each of the words.

IV. SMALL GROUPS: THINKING ABOUT STRATEGIES (30 MINUTES)

Step 1: Divide youth into two or three groups. Give each group an *Action Strategy Identification Chart*, either on butcher paper or as individual handouts. Ask the members of each group to take turns picking an action strategy out of the bag or box you prepared before session (see Materials and Preparation). Explain that once they pick an action, they should return to their group, read the slip of paper, and then lead a discussion on that action. Sample discussion structure:

- Determine whether the action is primarily education, activism, or advocacy.
- Think of an example from their experience, current events, or history.
- Consider the advantages and challenges of using this action.
- Discuss how appropriate, feasible, and effective they believe this action is for their particular campaign.



Example from Practice:

As a college sophomore, Elisa Marie Overall facilitated a cohort of youth who were interested in how their school's physical appearance reflected the student population. The group polled fellow students on school cleanliness and appearance, visited other campuses, interviewed staff and administrators, and took field trips to look at murals in school and community settings. Next they advocated for better bathroom facilities and created three student-vetted murals at their school. Four years later, one of the youth from this group shared the following: "I remember Elisa Marie saying that people shape their environment and that the environment shapes people, too. Trips to see other schools or to see the San Francisco murals helped us understand that."


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Step 2: When all of the papers have been drawn and their charts are fairly full, ask each group to take a few moments to rank the actions and agree on some actions they think would work best for their project.

Step 3: Have each group appoint a presenter to share back the highlights of their discussion and their conclusions with the other group(s). Ask the spokespeople to present their charts and explain their rankings and agreements. Check to make sure everyone understands each type of action.

V. CHOOSE ACTIONS (25 MINUTES)

After everyone has shared out, give each youth three or four sticker dots (depending on the number of actions you think would be reasonable to plan and execute). Ask them to place their dots next to the action or actions they think would be most effective.

Tally the results and record the top three to five on the left side of a clean sheet of butcher paper. Ask the youth to write their names next to the action they would most like to be involved in planning for the remainder of the year. Check to make sure the workload is evenly distributed for each action. If not, discuss how to equalize imbalances.

VI. CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Closing Circle Statement (Around the World): Which do you most identify with and why – activist, advocate, educator?

Examples of Youth in Action:**Advocates, Activists, and Educators**

Clara is a young woman in her late teens who works on environmental justice campaigns. She organizes protests (activism), talks to groups of middle and high school students about environmental and social justice issues (education), and works with others to create and screen film documentaries highlighting environmental injustices (advocacy).

*After her initial year of participation in YELL, **Marsha** continued as a mentor for the program. She explained that she sees herself as a teacher (educator), someone who can share her own experiences with younger students, offering them guidance as well as support. As a sophomore in high school, Marsha facilitates after-school research and advocacy sessions, and teaches a summer class for sixth graders on communications and team building.*

***Michael** is a high school student who has always loved art. When he found that he could not take an art class in high school because of district cutbacks that only allowed for a part-time art teacher, he decided to take action. First he went to different classrooms and talked to students about the budget cuts (education). Then he created a petition demanding more art classes signed by almost 80 percent of the students(activism). He took this petition to his school site council and asked it to fund a full-time art teacher at his school (advocacy). Michael also informed the media and publicized the issue (advocacy). The school decided to make the art teacher full time.*

Taking Action: Some Approaches to Social Change

Depending on audience and the nature of your topic, you will select different approaches – or combinations of approaches – for sharing your findings and recommendations.

A Continuum: While your plan can fall squarely into just one of these approaches, usually all three work together in some combination. By using these approaches in tandem, you can strengthen and broaden your impact.

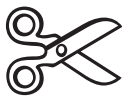
ACTION TYPE	MEANS...	PERSON...	IS SOMEONE WHO...
ADVOCACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguing on behalf of a particular issue, idea, or person • Standing up for something you believe in 	ADVOCATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stands up for people • Speaks out and gets their voice heard • Meets with people in power and asks for specific things
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building understanding and knowledge • Sharing information and ideas • Sharing findings from research 	EDUCATOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaches • Supports others • Mentors or empowers others
ACTIVISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking action or getting involved as a means of achieving a goal for change 	ACTIVIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts! • Fights for what they believe in • Protests and demonstrates • Gets people excited and involved

Action Strategy Identification Chart - Example

ACTION	TYPE OF STRATEGY	ADVANTAGES	CHALLENGES	USE AND PRIORITY FOR THIS PROJECT
Distribute flyers with facts about your topic	Education Example: Place pamphlets about an topic that you care about in the student center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares the facts and lets people read them according to interest • Gets topic to a lot of different people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost for production (copying and paper) • People might not read them 	High priority – could also do a column in the bilingual parent newsletter
Protest at City Hall	Activism Example: Organize a rally for a policy that is up for a vote.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows decision makers and the public that we are serious and that we care about this issue • Media could come 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation • Getting enough people there to make a real impact • Attracting media attention 	Maybe later – in the next phase – right now we need to build interest and momentum in our work
Produce a video and hold viewings	Advocacy Example: Show a documentary on a topic that you care about.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can publicize and have event at the school auditorium – get a wide audience • Have footage of interviews, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to produce • Production equipment • Limited footage 	Medium priority – this would get youth’s attention, but we would need someone with strong skills and commitment

Action Strategy Identification Chart

ACTION	TYPE OF STRATEGY (Advocacy, Education, Activism)	ADVANTAGES	CHALLENGES	USE AND PRIORITY FOR THIS PROJECT



Forms of Action

Write letters to community members

Produce street theater (skits, poetry, song)

Collect signatures on a petition

March to City Hall

Create a mural

Host a community forum

Distribute flyers with facts about your topic

Give a presentation to City Council

Display banners asking for a specific change

Meet with the school board to ask for a particular change

Create and present an award

Leave (walk-out)

Testify in court

Stay (sit-in)

Picket

Organize a strike or boycott

Schedule a rally

Produce a video and hold viewings

Hold a vigil

Produce a written report or a magazine

Set up an information booth at a public event

Create a Web site or blog

Steps to an Action Campaign

1. DETERMINE YOUR MESSAGE: "WHAT"

- What is the main thing you want to happen or change?
- What are your recommendations?
- Is there a catchy way to say this message to get it to stick in people's minds?

2. FORM YOUR ARGUMENT: "WHY"

- What facts or information support your argument or make it stronger?
- Why do you care? How does this connect to your vision or personal experience?

3. SELECT YOUR AUDIENCE(S): "WHO"

- Who needs to be convinced?
- Who has the power to make change happen around this? (Can be students, other youth, school leaders, law makers/politicians).
- Decide what you want your audiences to do or learn. Be specific!

4. PICK YOUR STRATEGIES: "HOW"

- What types of action strategies will you use?
- What forms of action are best suited to your cause and goals?

CHECK LIST

MESSAGE

- Are your recommendations clear?
- Is your message specific?
- Will people "get it" right away?
- Do you have a slogan or logo to promote your message?

ARGUMENT

- Is there evidence backing up your argument?
- Are there personal stories or interview quotes that highlight your recommendations?

AUDIENCE

- Do you know who you are trying to reach?
- Do you know exactly what you want them to do/learn?

STRATEGY

- Do you know what strategies you will use to share your findings and recommendations?
- Do the strategies match your audience/s?
- Do you have the time and resources to make your action plan happen?