

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT REPORT

2008 - 2009
CITY OF PORTLAND
&
MULTNOMAH
COUNTY, OREGON

Providing a Voice for Youth

The City of Portland and Multnomah County reach out to support and engage children and youth in many ways. This report, prepared by the Multnomah Youth Commission, the official youth advisory body to the County Board and City Council, highlights the achievements of the City/County Youth Engagement Team during the 2008-2009 program year.

2008-2009 Accomplishments

YouthPASS

The Youth Commission successfully lobbied to create a program providing free access to public transit for students. Building on a successful pilot at Franklin, Jefferson, and Roosevelt High Schools during the 08/09 school year, the Youth Commission worked with the Mayor's Office, Portland Public Schools, and TriMet to expand the program to all Portland Public High Schools for the 09/10 school year. The goal of YouthPASS is to lower barriers to youth involvement in school, out-of-school activities, and employment, while also reducing our carbon footprint, cutting traffic, and building a new generation of transit users. The Youth Commission remains committed to expanding the program to all middle- and high-school students throughout Multnomah County.



The City of Portland & Multnomah County Youth Engagement Team Program Partners:



YouthVOTE!

In November of 2008, the Youth Commission organized a youth-run candidate forum for City Council & County Board candidates, and in April of 2009 a forum for Portland Public School Board candidates was held. The goal of the forums is to educate youth about the candidates and the importance of voting, and also to hold candidates accountable to the youth whom they will represent—many of whom cannot vote. A vote was taken at the end of each forum and results were published. The Youth Commission also met with Secretary of State Kate Brown to advocate for a school-based, civic-education program which will infuse existing civics curriculum with local content as well as opportunities for youth to inform voters of their preferences on current issues. At the Secretary's suggestion, they are working with the Classroom Law Project to develop this idea. In the coming year, the Youth Commission will work to expand the ability of youth to make their voices heard in local elections.



School-Based Health Centers

This committee hit the ground running by holding youth focus groups during the summer of 2008. Youth participants shared their impressions of the centers, why they use them, why they don't, and what they'd like to see improved. This feedback was compiled into a report that Youth Commissioners presented to all the health center staff, and their work was also included in the School-Based Health Center application for a United Way grant. In addition, the committee held an Awareness Week at Grant High School -- one of thirteen schools with a health center.



Our Bill of Rights: Children + Youth

The Youth Commission worked to implement “Our Bill of Rights: Children + Youth” through its committee work and by partnering with other supportive organizations such as Portland Parks and Recreation and Multnomah County Libraries. YouthPass was part of the MYC’s “Top10” in the Bill of Rights action plan! The Youth Bill of Rights continues to guide the work of the Youth Commission and its partners. The Youth Bill of Rights was recognized nationally again this year when a Youth Commissioner presented a keynote address about this work during the 2009 National Service-Learning Conference, held in Nashville. Additionally, the National League of Cities is currently preparing a report on local government innovations in services to children and youth. Our Bill of Rights: Children + Youth is one of three innovations they are highlighting. Finally, the State Commission on Children & Families Positive Youth Development Alliance is looking at ways to support the development of Youth Bills of Rights in other counties across Oregon



Education

In response to growing concern about academic success in our community, including graduation rates, the Youth Commission decided to form a standing committee to provide feedback, advice, and advocacy around programs and policies designed to address this issue. A key role of the committee is to review the strategies and initiatives of the Education Cabinet led by Mayor Adams and Chair Wheeler. The Mayor and the Chair recognize that any successful strategy must include the voices of those most impacted – the Youth Commission is called upon to fill this role.



Voice Box Media

Once a Youth Commission committee, Voice Box Media (VBM) has successfully spun off into its own self-sustaining nonprofit entity that trains young people to produce high quality professional media, public relations, and marketing materials and events. VBM continues to work with the Youth Commission and professional clients like AT&T and Worksystems, Inc. The program is a win-win: clients receive high-quality media products at below-market rates AND local youth learn valuable skills while earning money and exerting youth voice.



Youth Planning Program

This innovative program at the Bureau of Planning was created, through the advocacy of the Youth Commission, in order to help youth have a voice in the future plans for the city which they will inherit. In its second year, the program accomplished the following:

- Engaged 350 youth in focus groups and surveys about the East Side MAX in order to improve the areas surrounding MAX stations and improvements to SE 122nd Powellhurst-Gilbert Study area;
- Completed a Youth Engagement Manual to assist City of Portland staff in working with young people;
- Awarded 8 grants to groups of youth working to implement the Youth Bill of Rights and VisionPDX in their neighborhoods and schools;
- Organized an interactive youth engagement event --"Youth Invasion" -- at City Hall to encourage youth to get connected to local government and other community activities, as well as to promote "Our Bill of Rights: Children + Youth". More than 100 youth had the opportunity to meet and speak with City Commissioners, find out about City, County, and community based services and programs, and take workshops from other youth organizations.



Recruitment and Training of Youth Commissioners

In 2008 - 2009, the Youth Commission successfully solicited applications from youth across the city and county in order to represent the demographics of our community as accurately as possible. Youth Commissioners were sworn in by elected officials and received training through a 3-day retreat at the start of the year. They also planned for the upcoming year during the one-day winter retreat. The Commission met every other week, alternating meeting sites between Portland City Hall and the Gresham Schools Building.

Youth Web Portal: PDXyouth

Conceived, designed, and written primarily by youth -- www.pdxyouth.org -- is designed to provide access, create involvement, and allow youth voice in the City of Portland." In 2008 - 2009, the Office of Management & Finance in partnership with members of the Multnomah Youth Commission, the Youth Planner Program, and the Mayor's Office completed seven focus groups to gather youth input on potential content, organization, and principles for a youth web portal that was under development. Following these focus groups, the Commission successfully advocated to establish a youth portal to engage youth and bring their voices into the City's online presence. The Commission declared this web portal to be one of four "core items most crucial to the advancement of Portland's young people for the Budget Year 2009-2010." (Youth Agenda, 2/08) A smaller planning group met over several months to sort through the input from the focus groups and direct the work of City staff who built the PDXyouth site. On the horizon is expansion of the site and the project through partnership with Multnomah County on content and with the Center for Advanced Learning in Gresham through capstone projects that will create a sustainable future for PDXyouth via a marketing plan and establishment of a Youth E-Board to oversee the site.



Youth Liaisons

This year, ten youth served as elected-official liaisons to each of the City and County Commissioners, including Mayors Potter and Adams and Chair Wheeler. Youth Commissioners met with their elected officials throughout the year to stay mutually informed. Pairs also participated in a photo project "Leadership: Through Our Eyes" about leadership in their community. The Youth Commission also had two policy liaisons who assisted the co-chairs and elected official liaisons. Policy liaisons were involved in media interactions, public events, and the Youth Commission's budget campaign.

Youth Budget Agenda

For the fourth year in a row, youth reviewed the County budget and, for the second time, conducted a comprehensive review of youth-related City budget items. At the City, the Youth Commission prioritized funding for the Youth Planner Program, the Office of Youth Violence Prevention, and Parks and Recreation Teen Programming. Youth made approximately 40 YouTube videos about their reasons for supporting their number one priority (the Youth Planner Program) and sent one each day to all the City Council members. This innovative campaign was successful in securing funding for the Youth Commission's priorities. For Multnomah County, the Youth Commission recognized the severity of the cuts which would need to be made and instead of advocating for one specific program provided the County Commissioners with a framework for what values they would make if they were forced to cut vital programs.

Answering Requests for Youth Input

The Youth Commission provided input to the following programs or processes:

Multnomah County Commission on Children, Families & Community ■ City of Portland Bureau of Planning & Sustainability (82nd MAX, 122nd Street Surveys; Youth Engagement Manual; East Portland Action Plan) ■ Multnomah County Libraries ■ Bureau of Management & Finance (pdxyouth.org) ■ Multnomah County Health Department School Based Health Centers (presented to management staff & follow all SBHC staff) ■ Mayor's Office (Education Cabinet & Summer Youth Corps) ■ Multnomah County Health Equity Initiative ■ Portland Children's Investment Fund ■ Multnomah County Department of Human Services (social media strategies) ■ Portland Parks and Recreation (Washington Monroe Community Center committee) ■ Trimet (YouthPass) ■ Oregon Commission on Children & Families ■ Mercy Corps (Action Center) ■ Oregon Open Adoption ■ Oregon Bus Project ■ Laurelhurst Elementary School (youth leadership) ■ unsolicited- media statement in response to shooting outside of all ages club "The Zone"