

Age Appropriateness in Youth Service Activities Grades 9-12



The service of young people is an important resource in solving community problems. But like any volunteer, youth volunteers need to be matched with appropriate opportunities. Developing age-appropriate service activities will ensure fulfilling experiences for volunteers and agencies. Depending on the age of youth, concrete developmental features must be present to retain his or her interest and energy in service.

This resource packet includes a brief overview of the developmental themes for youth in grades 9-12 and sample projects appropriate for this age group.

Developmental Themes for Youth in Grades 9-12

Everyone develops at a slightly different rate and in a slightly different way. However, general patterns can be seen within different age groups of youth. Consider these major developmental themes when designing appropriate service opportunities for youth in grades 9-12.

Intellectual Development

- Beginning to think abstractly
- Making fine conceptual distinctions
- Becoming more critical of traditions and institutions
- Connecting concrete experiences and abstract concepts
- Considering the hypothetical (future and remote)
- Formulating a variety of solutions for problems
- Dealing with logical and imaginary solutions
- Aspiring to goals beyond their capabilities
- Learning how to manage time and personal health
- Assuming responsibility for career planning and its consequences
- Developing important life skills, such as budgeting and time management

Physical Development

- Stabilizing physical changes
- Increasing attention span
- Wanting to be treated more like an adult

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Identity Development

- Looking for a sense of personal identity
- Tending to be self-critical
- Evaluating self and thinking about future
- Realizing competitiveness among peers, resulting in some distrust
- Confiding more in friends than parents
- Worrying about physical appearance
- Needing assurance of acceptance and security of parents

Social Development

- Focusing less on self-centered values
- Emerging understanding of moral principles
- Maintaining long-lasting friendships
- Being influenced by peer group
- Experiencing conflict between peer and adult roles

Values

- Taking interest in philosophical and ethical problems
- Gaining awareness of and verbalizing contradictions in moral code
- Being influenced by group beliefs
- Developing citizenship skills important to responsible participation in a democratic society

*Adapted from A Practical Guide for Developing Agency/School Partnerships for Service-Learning, Points of Light Foundation, The Power and Potential of Youth in Services to Communities, Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services, and Learning By Giving, National Youth Leadership Council.

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Age Appropriate Service for High School Students

Is age appropriate...

- Cleaning a polluted lake or river
- Researching general information on political platforms and distributing it to peers.
- Making a panel for the AIDS Quilt and giving awareness presentations
- Helping design a playground for an underprivileged neighborhood
- Volunteering as a candy striper in a hospital
- Holding a forum about racism to form possible community solutions
- Working as aides in group homes for adults with disabilities
- Setting up a peer counseling program

Is not Age Appropriate...

- Making posters about pollution
- Developing a political candidate's talking points for a debate
- Facilitating an AIDS support group
- Building a playground in an underprivileged neighborhood
- Running the candy striper volunteer program at a hospital
- Organizing and facilitating a weekend diversity retreat
- Making holiday decorations to be used in group homes for adults with disabilities
- Providing therapy for drug- or alcohol-addicted peers

Adapted from *A Practical Guide for Developing Agency/School Partnerships for Service-Learning*, Points of Light Foundation, *The Power and Potential of Youth in Services to Communities*, Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services, and *Learning By Giving*, National Youth Leadership Council. Originally published by Points of Light Foundation. Revised by HandsOn Network in 2010.