

AFFINITY DIAGRAMS

Definition: A group decision-making technique designed to sort a large number of ideas, process variables, concepts, and opinions into naturally related groups. These groups are connected by a simple concept.

Purpose: To sort a list of ideas into groups and build consensus about how we see the ideas and what we value.

Guidelines:

- Ensure ideas are described with phrases or sentences.
- Minimize the discussion while sorting -- discuss while developing the header cards.
- Aim for 5-10 groups.
- If one group is much larger than others, consider splitting it.

How to Conduct an Affinity Sort:

- Conduct a brainstorming session on the topic under investigation.
- Clarify the list of ideas. Record them on small cards or Post-It notes.
- Randomly lay out cards on a table, flipchart, wall, etc.
- Without speaking, sort the cards into "similar" groups based on your gut reaction. If you don't like the placement of a particular card, move it. Continue until consensus is reached. Create header cards consisting of a concise 3-5 word description; the unifying concept for the group. Place header card at top of each group.
- Discuss the groupings and try to understand how the groups relate to each other.

Tips:

- Inquire whether ideas are adequately clarified.
- Use only 3-5 words in the phrase on the header card to describe the group.
- If possible, have groupings reviewed by non-team personnel.
- While sorting, physically get up and gather around the area where the cards are placed.
- Team members will ultimately reach agreement on placement, if for no other reason than exhaustion.
- Sorting should not start until all team members are ready.
- If an idea fits in more than one category or group, and consensus about placement cannot be reached, make a second card and place it in both groups.

Examples of Youth-Led Projects from NYC 2011

CCNY Basie Beacon @ MS 72

Elementary and middle school students decided to focus on the issue of budget cuts to education, particularly in New York City schools. As part of this project, students are researching the amount of money schools have lost, and how many teachers have been laid off, or are in danger of being laid off. They are also researching the impact of teacher layoffs on classroom sizes and the overall quality of education for young people. Students are developing a newsletter for their peers, which highlights their research and opinions about the issue. They are also creating a short video featuring interviews they conducted with teachers at their school so that their opinions can be shared with a larger audience.

Flushing YMCA – Beacon Center 189

Elementary and middle school students planted a vegetable and herb garden at the school. A group of approximately 20 participants worked in the garden and created all of the artwork to be displayed in the garden. The canvas for the mural and the wood used for the signs were made from reused materials. It is the students' hope to share the herbs and vegetables produced by the garden with their families, friends, and a local homeless shelter. Additionally, they would like to use the garden as a means to get the community more involved in the afterschool program. They plan on having a celebration to unveil the garden to the community at the Y's end-of-year celebration.

Groundwork, Inc. – Sumner Community Center

A group of fifth graders decided to plan an event that "bridges the gap" between youth and senior citizens who attend programming at the community center. Young people created and carried out a survey of the seniors to learn what types of programming they participate in and what issues they are concerned about within the community. The students then planned and carried out a field day event where activities were co-led by young people and seniors.

Phipps Cornerstone Community Program

Teen participants were concerned about the rise in obesity of local adolescents. As a result, they surveyed teens that attend the program to ascertain what types of foods they eat on a regular basis in order to create healthier versions of those recipes. During weekly cooking classes, the participants researched and tested recipe options. Several of these healthier versions will be demonstrated to local teens in an effort to increase their knowledge about food choices and to educate them on food-related health issues affecting adolescents, such as obesity and diabetes. Video demonstrations and recipes will also be posted onto the group's website so that local teens can access the information both at the center and at home.

Sunnyside Community Services – Beacon Program @ IS 5

The middle school cooking club is learning how to make simple recipes that they can easily replicate at home using affordable, readily available ingredients and with minimal adult supervision. Participants have learned knife cuts, cooking terminology, how recipes are written, and the importance of maintaining a safe and hygienic kitchen. The cooks selected their favorite recipes to publish in a cookbook. Pictures showing the ingredients and final product will accompany each recipe. Participants also did a demonstration for the larger Beacon community on how to make healthy snacks, such as blueberry smoothies, using substitutions like honey instead of sugar and yogurt instead of ice cream.

Center for Family Life – Community School Project Beacon @ PS 1

A group of elementary school students decided to focus on making Sunset Park a cleaner, more enjoyable space for the community. The students learned about the wildlife in their local park, and planned and participated in a park clean-up event in collaboration with the Parks Department. Students also wrote a letter to local politicians to voice their concerns about keeping parks safe, clean and accessible to all community residents.

Queens Community House – Beacon Program @ JHS 190

Students in the Youth Community Planning Collaborative (YCPC) decided to address the aftermath of the tornado that hit Forrest Hills in September 2010, which had a devastating effect on the community and on Rego Park. Students did research on how the park was affected, and conducted a survey of the damage in order to determine how many trees needed to be replaced. In collaboration with local government officials, and with the support of DYCD's Beacon Civic Engagement initiative (pilot), students participated in a large-scale replanting project in April 2011.



PROJECT PLANNING WORKSHEET

Use this form to plan a project that you can lead with the young people you work with. You can also modify this form to use for future projects, and include opportunities for young people to be involved in the planning process.

Project Idea –
(describe the project you'd like to do)

Objectives for Young People –
(what do you want participants to get out of it? what skills/knowledge do you want them to build?)

Final “product” –
(what are young people working towards? what will the young people make, present or perform as a culmination of the project? give a brief description.)

Final Reflection/Evaluation
(how will you evaluate the “success” of the project after it is completed?)

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PROJECT PLAN

(what activities will the project consist of? i.e. weekly meetings, workshops, trips, guest speakers, etc. when will each of these things happen? use the grid below to map out your project plan.)

Activity	Date(s)/Times	Materials/Resources Needed	Role of Young People	Role of Leader(s)	Plan for Reflection

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PROJECT PLANNING

- Make sure the process of selecting a project is **youth-led**. You can help young people brainstorm themes or topics as a group, or ask them to do some individual research using a tool like the “Project Brainstorming Form.” Once you have some ideas about what young people are interested in, you can help them generate a list of specific project ideas. Once you have a list of ideas, try to bring young people in your group to consensus about the project idea using techniques like a “sticker vote”.
- Once you’ve selected a project idea, **develop specific goals and objectives**, including the skills and knowledge you want young people to gain as a result of participating
- Develop a project plan including timeline for the project. **Begin with the end in mind**. Consider what “product” or event the project will culminate with and work backwards from there. Other than developing the product or planning the event, think about the additional activities you’ll do with young people along the way to help them build the skills and knowledge needed to make the project a success.
- Develop a plan to **reflect** with youth at each step of the project’s implementation using tools such as:
 - o Journals
 - o Small/large group discussion
 - o Oral or written “reports” or presentations
- **Evaluate the process** and reflect on the entire process with youth when it is completed. Use the goals and objectives you set at the beginning of the process as a tool to “measure” the project’s success and extent to which young people have benefitted from participating in the project.

PROJECT BRAINSTORMING FORM

- What are some of the things you are interested in (hobbies, things you like to do afterschool, etc.)?
- What are some things about your community that you really like?
- What are some things about your community you want to improve?
- What do other people in your community care about?
- If you're not sure, who can you ask? Write down the names of three people from your community you could ask:
- What kind of project could you do to improve/help your community?