

**'KNOCK-YOUR-SOCKS  
-OFF'**  
TRAINING TEENS to be  
**SUCCESSFUL  
ACTIVISTS!**

The  Complete Guide for Facilitating  
this 1-2 Hour Workshop

by

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with Emanuel Tsourounis, II

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Congressional Monitor, Inc.

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## OVERVIEW

For the past decade, I have led hundreds of workshops in more than 40 states designed for young people of all ages and backgrounds. While there is no guarantee that anyone can convince everyone that they can make an impact in their corner of the world, I have had remarkable success with one workshop approach. It opens minds, expands thinking, reveals effective strategies and, most important, inspires hope by sharing true stories of what young people have achieved on a range of issues across America.

This skill-building workshop that I deliver as either a compressed or in-depth program, begins by confronting the cynicism and widespread attitude: “Why bother? Who will listen and really respond to our ideas?” Visualizing and analyzing half a dozen case studies lead the way to identifying specific organizing and advocacy tactics. After considering various skills and strategies, participants move toward developing their own action plan for pursuing positive community change. At the conclusion of this interactive workshop, participants will have a clear sense of the steps involved to initiate and conduct an effective project or campaign.

In my years of mentoring and monitoring young activists under the umbrella of the Youth Activism Project national clearinghouse, I’ve found that immediate follow up in the days and weeks after an initial training is a critical success factor. While determination can overcome apathy, ridicule and outright opposition initially, incremental accomplishments build confidence in the long term. This often means that the workshop facilitator and/or adult advisors should reconnect with participants to offer encouragement and help in transforming their ideas into action. Think of this stage as keeping the candle burning. Following this youth empowerment training, participants will have a sense that indeed they can have a real impact but without continued reinforcement, the flame can fade into smoke.

This manual offers concrete planning and action techniques to help build the momentum that turns passion and perseverance into victory.

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”**

**—Margaret Mead**

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- ⌘ to increase knowledge about the influential role of young people as agents for change
- ⌘ to gain greater understanding about how youths can be effective leaders in their community
- ⌘ to teach young people how to transform their vision into action
- ⌘ to learn specific advocacy skills and strategies
- ⌘ to identify potential partners and resources in the community
- ⌘ to develop a preliminary action plan
- ⌘ to prioritize initial implementation steps
- ⌘ to boost a can-do attitude and belief that young people can make an impact
- ⌘ to instill the importance of civic engagement and participatory democracy

**"Vision without action is merely a dream,  
Action without vision is merely passing time, but  
Action with vision can change the world."**

**—Nelson Mandela**

## 10 TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- 1) **Unique Talents and Style** – Let your individuality show. Avoid being just a friendly but robot-like facilitator.
- 2) **Ownership** – The Facilitator Training Outlines include a script so anyone can use them. I encourage you to revise these templates and use your own words.
- 3) **Comfortable & Real** – Trust your instincts. If there are any portions of these workshops that don't feel right to you, don't use them. Participants will sense your lack of confidence.
- 4) **Rely on Participants** – Ask participants for input, for example, ideas for dividing the group into small breakouts to adding other categories to the Team Gameplan. This type of collaboration adds to the empowering process.
- 5) **Language** – Avoid calling participants “kids.” It's one thing when young people use this term but it can be demeaning when adults say it.
- 6) **Food** – Providing snacks is recommended but food is not a substitute for substance.
- 7) **Avoid Classroom Situations** - Don't put anyone on the spot to respond to questions and also let individuals opt out of talking when they don't feel like it.
- 8) **Affirm & Be Authentic** – Encourage an atmosphere by using such language as “interesting idea” or “good point” but also confront participants about what is not being said.
- 9) **Flow & Flexibility** – Figure out each unit of the workshop and then be prepared to spend more or less time on certain sections. Don't shortcut discussions but try to maintain a good pace and energy level.
- 10) **Fun & Serious** – A mix of humor and passion is the secret.

*“I prefer the errors of enthusiasm to the indifference of wisdom.”*

*—Anatole France*

**COMPLETE WORKSHOP CHECKLIST**

- Nametags
- Pocket Folders (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Pre-Assessment
- Post-Assessment (copy on different color paper)
- Believe It or Not Handouts
- Facilitator's Believe It or Not Backgrounder
- Your Own Believe It or Not Stories (optional)
- Video Clips
- Facilitator's Video Clips Backgrounder
- TV/VCR
- Team Gameplan Handouts
- Facilitator's Gameplan Backgrounder
- Mini-prizes – pens, goodies, T-shirts, etc. (optional)
- Easel, paper and markers
- Microphone (optional)
- Boombox & CDs (optional)



## **Facilitator's 60-Minute Training Outline**

This fast-paced training outline is much less flexible than the longer version because so much is covered in one hour. It is wise to anticipate which sections you might shorten or eliminate in case the workshop starts late due to delayed arrivals, logistical snafus, etc. The left column tells the number of minutes for each section followed by the total length up to that point in the workshop. Clarifying instructions for the facilitator are interspersed in the word-for-word script. All the handouts for participants as well as background information for the facilitator are included after the Facilitator's 2-Hour Training Outline.

<b>TIME FRAME</b>	<b>60-MINUTE SNAPSHOT</b>
<b>5 minutes</b>	<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>
<b>2 minutes</b>	<b>Pre-Assessment</b>
<b>3 minutes</b>	<b>Shatter Stereotypes</b>
<b>15 minutes</b>	<b>Believe It or Not Stories</b>
<b>10 minutes</b>	<b>Video Clips</b>
<b>15 minutes</b>	<b>Team Gameplan</b>
<b>5 minutes</b>	<b>Team Highlights</b>
<b>5 minutes</b>	<b>Post-Assessment &amp; Send Off</b>

## Script/Content/Notes

## Logistics/Resources

### WELCOME & INTROS

**5**  
minutes



(If group is over 30, limit introductions to name only.)

Thanks for coming. Let's begin with a quick round of introductions. Say your name, where you are from (school, organization, city, etc.) and something unusual about yourself, for example, a strange pet, weird food you like. (Facilitator should start and set the pace so intros don't drag.)

The objective of this workshop is to convince everyone here that young people can be agents for change today.

Room Set-up: Ideally, chairs in a circle. Avoid classroom or lecture style sitting.

Optional:  
Boombox with music on when people arrive to improve atmospherics

### PRE-ASSESSMENT

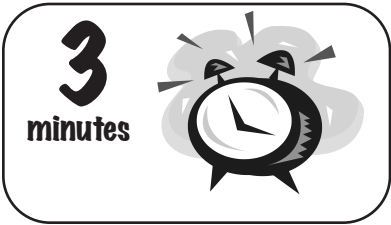
**2**  
minutes



First, let's take a minute to complete the short survey. This is completely anonymous. Near the top, there's a blank space for a Student #. Make up a random 5-digit code and fill in this space on both surveys. Now put the one on colored paper away (in your folder or with other handouts) and just complete the other one. (Facilitator should collect this pre-assessment immediately.)

If using pocket folders, include both the pre- and post-assessment forms or pass out both forms with pen or pencil.

**Total :07**



**SHATTER STEREOTYPES**

**You know the expression: “Kids should be seen and not heard.” Let’s change that. How would you all reword it?**

[Wait for responses and keep encouraging audience to make suggestions. Write down revisions on easel.] Possibilities might result in “Young People Should Be Seen and Heard and Listened To and Respected and Taken Seriously.”

**There are lots of reasons why “Young people should be seen and heard and ...”**

**• First of all, those under 18 years of age make up what percentage of the population? Any guesses? Answer: 26%**

[Give prize to whoever shouts out the right answer.]

**That’s 1/4 of the population who should be “seen and heard and respected.”**

**• What are some other reasons???**

[Encourage audience feedback]

**• Here’s another reason: The Millennial Generation - that includes all of you—those born after 1982 ñ spend \$170 BILLION each year. You spend it at fast food spots and diners, convenience stores and malls, movies. As consumers and customers, you pay sales tax. And many of you work and pay taxes. But everyone knows it’s a struggle for young people to be seen and heard and taken seriously.**

Chairs can remain in a circle

Easel and markers

Optional:  
Pass out mini-prizes to those offering suggestions and answers

**Total :10**

## Script/Content/Notes

## Logistics/Resources



### BELIEVE IT OR NOT STORIES

**Let's count off 1-2-3-4-5. All the 10s come over to this table, 2's here!**

(If time allows, refer to 2-Hour Outline that uses fast-paced birthday month exercise to create 10 subgroups.)

**Here are five different success stories** (Story #1 to Group #1, etc.) **and in 5 minutes your mission is to decide together whether it is true or not.** (Give a time reminder.) **Okay, is each team ready? The first story is...** (Facilitator reads or better yet, retells the story. This saves time and ensures everyone can hear and understand it.) **What is the verdict from Group 1?** (Continue to Group 2, etc.)

(If there are more than 5 breakouts, have the other team that has analyzed the same story immediately share their answer and tell what clue led them to that conclusion. Encourage discussion after each group presents and initiate applause after each one.

Refer to Facilitator's Believe It or Not Backgrounder that gives correct answers and, in the case of the stories that are not true, encourage audience participation on what different strategies young activists might have used to succeed.)

Believe It or Not Handouts for each group

Facilitator's Believe It or Not Backgrounder

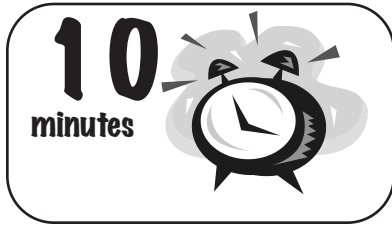
Optional: You may want to substitute with other stories that highlight a specific issue or a youth-led project that occurred in your community

Optional: Mini-prizes for the correct answers

**Total :25**

## Script/Content/Notes

## Logistics/Resources



### VIDEO CLIPS

Here are a few TV news clips about young activists who definitely have been “seen and heard.”

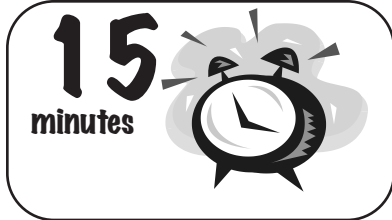
After you decide which ones to show (depending on age group, organization mission, community culture), play one clip and then pause the tape-- 5 seconds of black screen between each one--then ask for reactions about why they think these students made an impact (have the ear of powerful adults, speak before school board, gain media coverage, etc.)

AV: TV/VCR  
Video clips

Easel & Markers

Select 3 or 4 video clips that are most appropriate for the group. Refer to Facilitator’s Video Clips Backgrounder for description and length of each clip along with introductions for each one and follow up questions.

**Total :35**



### TEAM GAMEPLAN

(Either have everyone stay in the small groups or quickly move back with their team from same school, community, etc.)

Pass out Team Gameplan handouts to everyone or have them remove from pocket folder. **Now it’s time to put your heads together. Spend the first 5 minutes and invite everyone to share a specific problem or idea that they’d like to act on. One person in your group needs to be the official recorder and fill out the Team Gameplan. Write down all these thoughts. In the next 10 minutes, move through the Gameplan and brainstorm specific strategies and tactics.** (Keep an eye on the clock and give periodic reminders.)


Team Gameplan Handout

**Total :50**

## Script/Content/Notes

## Logistics/Resources

**5**  
minutes



### TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

**Let's hear some highlights from each team. Did any group have one burning issue you definitely want to act on?** (Ideally walk with microphone to have someone from each group share.

Depending on time, move through Gameplan and solicit from various teams their ideas about specific strategies such as recruiting, researching, publicizing. Encourage other teams to chime in. Those volunteering tactics could receive mini-prizes.

Microphone (optional)  
  
Facilitator's Team  
Gameplan Backgrounder

**Total :55**

**5**  
minutes



### POST-ASSESSMENT & SEND OFF

**This is a great start. We'll follow up on these ideas soon.**

**If each Team could make sure to turn in one Gameplan to capture this history in the making. Also, take a minute right now to complete the anonymous questionnaire.**

**Congratulations to all of you who want to put your passion into action. And as the founder of The Body Shop says:**

**"If you believe you are too small to make a difference, you've never been in bed with a mosquito."**

Mini-prizes

Post-Assessment Handout

Optional:  
Boombox & music playing as people mingle

**Total :60**

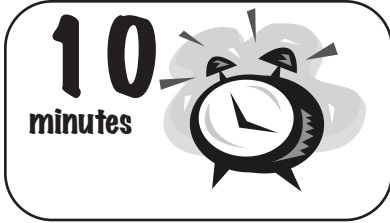
## Facilitator's 2-Hour Training Outline

This workshop outline is more flexible than the 60-Minute version. This training can be easily shortened to 90 minutes or expanded beyond a 2-hour format. The left column tells the number of minutes for each section followed by the total length up to that point in the workshop. Clarifying instructions for the facilitator are interspersed in the word-for-word script. All the handouts for participants as well as background information for the facilitator are included after this training outline.

<b>TIME FRAME</b>	<b>2-HOUR SNAPSHOT</b>
<b>10 minutes</b>	<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>
<b>2 minutes</b>	<b>Pre-Assessment</b>
<b>3 minutes</b>	<b>Shatter Stereotypes</b>
<b>15 minutes</b>	<b>Think Outside the Box</b>
<b>20 minutes</b>	<b>Believe It or Not Stories</b>
<b>10 minutes</b>	<b>Video Clips</b>
<b>10 minutes</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>20 minutes</b>	<b>Team Gameplan</b>
<b>12 minutes</b>	<b>Team Highlights</b>
<b>3 minutes</b>	<b>Post-Assessment</b>
<b>15 minutes</b>	<b>Closing Activity</b>

## Script/Content/Notes

## Logistics/Resources



### WELCOME & INTROS

Thanks for coming. Let's begin with a quick round of introductions. Say your name, where you are from (school, organization, city, etc.) and something unusual about yourself, for example, a strange pet, weird food you like. (Facilitator should start and set the pace so intros don't drag.)

The objective of this workshop is to convince everyone here that young people can be agents for change today.

### PRE-ASSESSMENT

First, let's take a minute to complete the short survey. This is completely anonymous. Near the top right side, there's a blank space for a Student #. Make up a random 5-digit code and fill in this space on both questionnaires. Now put the one on colored paper away for now (or in your folder) and just complete the pre-assessment survey. (Facilitator should collect this form immediately.)

Room Set-up: Ideally, chairs in a circle. Avoid classroom or lecture style sitting.

Optional:  
Boombox with music on when people arrive to improve atmospherics



If using pocket folders, include both the pre- and post-assessment forms or pass out both forms with pen or pencil.

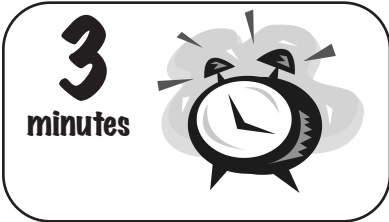
**Total :12**



**Script/Content/Notes**

**Logistics/Resources**

**SHATTER STEREOTYPES**



**You know the expression: “Kids should be seen and not heard.” Let’s change that. How would you all reword it?**

[Wait for responses and keep encouraging audience to make suggestions. Write down revisions on easel.] Possibilities might result in “Young People Should Be Seen and Heard and Listened To and Respected and Taken Seriously.”

**There are lots of reasons why “Young people should be seen and heard and ...”**

**• First of all, those under 18 years of age make up what percentage of the population? Any guesses? Answer: 26%**

[Give prize to whoever shouts out the right answer.]

**That’s 1/4 of the population who should be “seen and heard and respected.”**

**• What are some other reasons???**

[Encourage audience feedback]

**• Here’s another reason: The Millennial Generation - that includes all of you—those born after 1981 spend \$170 BILLION each year. You spend it at fast food spots and diners, convenience stores and malls, movies. As consumers and customers, you pay sales tax. And many of you work and pay taxes. But everyone knows it’s a struggle for young people to be seen and heard and taken seriously.**

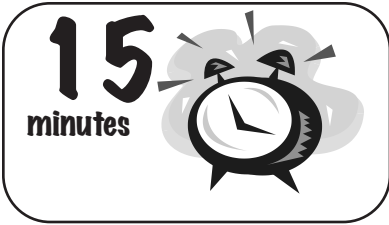
Chairs remain in a circle

Easel and markers

Optional:

Pass out mini-prizes to those offering suggestions and answers

**Total :15**

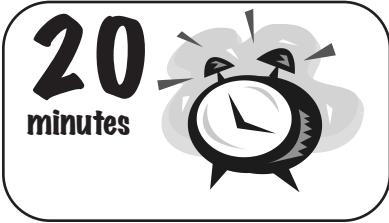


**THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX Activity**

**It's no secret that young people are not taken seriously. There are some special skills needed in order to òbe seen and heard and listened to..."**

**Let's explore one essential skill by pairing up with someone you don't know. Does everyone have a partner? (If someone is alone, have that person join a pair.) Now take a hard look from head to toe at one another and after that, turn away from each other and change 2 things that are visible but not too obvious. Then face each other and figure out what is different. (After about 2 minutes, ask who did something pretty clever.) Now, make 12 visible changes! ("Impossible" will be the likely response. Allow about 5 minutes.) Who's been able to spot the 12 changes? (Solicit feedback.) Who thought at first this was impossible but once you got going, realized you could put your hair behind your ear, fold your cuff differently..?" What does this demonstrate? (Solicit feedback.) Yes, don't be afraid to try. Don't let imaginary boundaries stop you. Be inventive. Agents for change are creative and think outside the box!**

**Total :30**



## Script/Content/Notes

## Logistics/Resources

### **BELIEVE IT OR NOT STORIES**

(Divide the group into small teams for the next exercise either by counting off 1-2-3-4-5 or, if time permits, use the following activity.)

**Now let's count off 1-2-3-4-5....**

OR

**Everyone stand up and without saying a word, find everyone who was born in the same month as you. Remember - no talking.** (At first, there may be stunned looks but soon people will be holding up some fingers and everyone will catch on). **Excellent! Is it anyone's birthday today? Okay, let's get each month to line up starting with January. Now can we merge the two smallest months to make a total of 10 groups.**

(It also may be necessary to subdivide a big month so that the 10 groups are more or less the same size. With a smaller number of participants, you may want to create 5 groups. )

**Here are 5 different stories** (pass out Believe It or Not story #1 to groups 1 (January) & 6 (June); #2 to groups 2 & 7; #3 to groups 3 & 8; #4 to groups 4 & 9; #5 to groups 5 & 10.) **Your mission in the next 5 minutes is to decide together whether it is true or not.** (After 5 minutes...) **Okay, is each team ready? The first story is...**

Believe It or Not  
Handouts for each group

Facilitator's Believe It or Not Backgrounder

Optional: You may want to substitute with other stories that highlight a specific issue or a youth-led project that occurred in your community

**continues on next page** 

## Script/Content/Notes

## Logistics/Resources

(Facilitator reads or summarizes the story to save time and make sure that everyone can hear and understand it. Then take microphone over to the group.) **What is your verdict?**

(If there are more than 5 breakouts, have the other team that has analyzed the same story immediately share their answer and tell what clue led them to that conclusion. Encourage discussion after each group presents and initiate applause after each one. Refer to Facilitator's Believe It or Not Backgrounder that gives correct answers and in the case of the stories that are not true, encourage audience participation on what different strategies young activists could have used to succeed.)

AV: Having each spokesperson use the microphone will help maintain attention, especially during the reading or retelling of story.

Optional: Mini-prizes for the correct answers

AV: TV/VCR  
Video clips

Easel & Markers

Select 3 or 4 video clips that are most appropriate for the group. (Refer to Facilitator's Video Clips Backgrounder for description and length of each clip along with introductions for each one and follow up questions.)

**Total :50**

**10**  
minutes



## VIDEO CLIPS

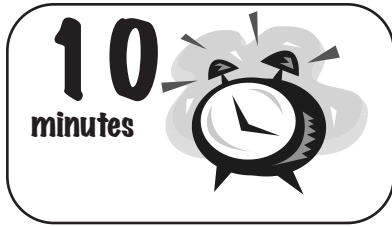
**Here are a few TV news clips about young activists who definitely have been "seen and heard."**

After you decide which ones to show (depending on age group, organization mission, community culture), play one clip and then pause the tape-- 5 seconds of black screen between each one--then ask for reactions about why they think these students made an impact (have the ear of powerful adults, speak before school board, gain media coverage, etc.)

**Total :60**

## Script/Content/Notes

## Logistics/Resources

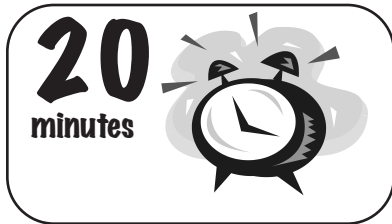


### BREAK (Optional)

Snack

Optional:  
Boombox & music

**Total 1:10**



### TEAM GAMEPLAN

(Either have everyone stay in the small groups or move back with their team from same school, community, etc.)

Team Gameplan Handout

Pass out Team Gameplan handouts to everyone or have them remove from pocket folder.

**Now it's time to put your heads together. Spend the first 5 minutes and invite everyone to share a specific problem or idea that they'd like to act on. One person in your group needs to be the official recorder and capture these thoughts. In the next 10 minutes, move through the Gameplan and brainstorm specific strategies and tactics.**

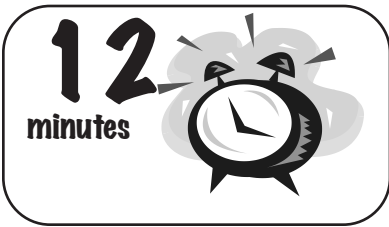
(Keep an eye on the clock and give periodic reminders.)

**Okay, Let's wrap it up and hear from each team - maximum 2 minutes each.**

**Total 1:30**

## Script/Content/Notes

## Logistics/Resources



### TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

**Let's start with this team.** (Try to begin with a group that you noticed seemed focused and save the strongest team to do the final presentation.) **Share with us the "First Idea Our Team Will Tackle," "Our Catchy Campaign Name," "Possible Partners," and "Immediate First Step."** Also, if you came up with really clever Think Outside The Box strategy, share that and get a prize! If necessary, repeat 2- minute time limit, especially if there are more than 5 groups. Refer to Facilitator's Team Gameplan Backgrounder to reinforce and enhance strategies, for example, possible partners and funders. Encourage others to chime in with other ideas. Thank each team and initiate applause after each presentation.

Microphone (optional)

Facilitator's Team  
Gameplan Backgrounder

Optional:  
Mini-prizes to each spokesperson or those who contribute Think Outside the Box strategies.

**Total 1:42**



### POST-ASSESSMENT

**This is a great start. We'll follow up on these ideas soon.**

Post-Assessment  
Handout

If each team's recorder could make sure to turn in one Gameplan to capture this history in the making. Also, if everyone could take a minute right now to complete the questionnaire.

**Total 1:45**

## Script/Content/Notes

## Logistics/Resources



### WRAP UP & SEND OFF

(Not recommended for groups much larger than 30)

**Let's all stand in a circle. Share something about this workshop that makes you believe that you can be an agent for change today. After you speak, hold onto the end of the string/yarn as you toss the ball to someone else. I'll start...** (Share something specific and concrete to set the tone and pace. After everyone has had their turn, here are two ways to end this closing activity.) **There's an Ethiopian proverb: òlf spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion." Indeed, we'õe got the talent here to make that happen.** (If time permits, pass around scissors so everyone can save their part of the web to take with them.)

**Thanks for coming!**

Ball of Yarn or String and Scissors

Optional:  
Boombox & music playing as people mingle and leave

**Total 2:00**



**Believe it or not!**

**NUMBER 1**

**A high school sophomore and two of her classmates were upset that there was no place to hang out in town. This trio had the idea of transforming an old building into a teen center but could not find any city leader who thought this project should be a priority.**

**Being in the state capitol, she called the operator and got the main number for the Governor. This cold call led to a senior staff aide who paid attention. The Governor's office pressured local elected officials to act and the City Council agreed to support the idea.**

**A few months later, the Council went back on its promise to pay the salary for the director of the teen center. Again, the student group mobilized their friends, parents, and neighbors to call City Council members at their homes at night. That telephone tree won the necessary support to fund New Horizons, a center run by teens for teens with programs ranging from free dances to health counseling and job assistance.**





**Believe it or not!**

**NUMBER 2**

**The summer jobs program that provides opportunities for 14 to 17 year olds was going to be cut because there wasn't enough money in the state budget.**

**Students from youth groups around the state started a petition drive and collected over 10,000 signatures. Local rallies were also held that attracted lots of news media coverage. Another strategy to build support was students got people of all ages to sign postcards that urged continuation of this successful employment initiative. The statewide coalition called Campaign for Summer Jobs delivered all the signed petitions and postcards to legislators at the State Capitol.**

**Ultimately, the Governor committed \$25 million to fully fund this statewide program.**



**Believe it or not!**

**NUMBER 3**

**"To Pee or Not To Pee" was the eye-catching headline in the high school newspaper. This student editorial criticized the policy of locking bathrooms to reduce smoking. The author of this article recruited several friends at a number of other high schools. Together they started a countywide organization called Students Oppose Smoking/Save Our Schools or S.O.S.**

**Students suffering from asthma together with student smokers who were trying to quit held a press conference. They urged their School Board to enforce the "no tobacco use" policy by anyone on school property. Local newspapers and TV stations covered the event and the publicity caused the creation of the School Superintendent's task force that included S.O.S. members and other students. The result: new signs were displayed all over campus and a new teen cessation program was available to those wanting to quit.**



**Believe it or not!**

**NUMBER 4**

**A youth group called Teens on Target conducted a survey of their neighborhood, especially near schools, and then compared their findings with nearby suburban communities. They issued a report that began with the statement: "Why can a kid get a gun in a few hours, but have to take a bus outside the neighborhood to buy school supplies?" This powerful sound bite got picked up by the news media.**

**This youth group persuaded the major city paper to stop running ads for guns in their newspaper. With this momentum, several Teens on Target members testified before the City Council, urging passage of several local gun control laws. Lobbyists for the National Rifle Association were among those who testified in opposition. These young activists helped get a trigger lock and also a gun tracing ordinance passed in their city.**



**Believe it or not!**

**NUMBER 5**

**A high school student organized a teach-in after school and mobilized a group of 20 peers to lobby state legislators. The issue was that women earn only 66 cents for every dollar a man makes.**

**On one of many visits to the Statehouse during their three-month campaign, they passed out cookies—some large and others 34% smaller—with messages such as "Aren't we worth it? Vote yes on HB 81."**

**The result was passage of a new law called the Compensation Pay Study to compare how much males and females earn as state employees.**

## FACILITATOR'S BELIEVE IT or NOT BACKGROUNDER (OLDER TEENS)

### BELIEVE IT OR NOT #1

A high school sophomore and two of her classmates were upset that there was no place to hang out in town. This trio had the idea of transforming an old building into a teen center but could not find any city leader who thought this project should be a priority. Being in the state capitol, she called the operator and got the main number for the Governor. This cold call led to a senior staff aide who paid attention. The Governor's office pressured local elected officials to act and the City Council agreed to support the idea. A few months later, the Council went back on its promise to pay the salary for the director of the teen center. Again, the student group mobilized their friends, parents, and neighbors to call City Council members at their homes at night. That telephone tree won the necessary support to fund New Horizons, a center run by teens for teens with programs ranging from free dances to health counseling and job assistance. **TRUE: Getting numerous bigwigs and community folks in Sumter, South Carolina on their side was important but without persistence, they would not have won.**

### BELIEVE IT OR NOT #2

The summer jobs program that provides opportunities for 14-17 year olds was going to be cut because there wasn't enough money in the state budget. Students from youth groups around the state started a petition drive and collected over 10,000 signatures. Local rallies were also held that attracted lots of news media coverage. Another strategy to build support was students got people of all ages to sign postcards that urged continuation of this successful employment initiative. The statewide coalition called Campaign for Summer Jobs delivered all the signed petitions and postcards to legislators at the State Capitol. Ultimately, the Governor committed \$25 million to fully fund this statewide program. **FALSE: Petitions can be effective in building support for a cause but rarely does this tactic prove persuasive with the powers-that-be. Personal hand-written letters as well as face-to-face visits with elected officials tend to bring the best results. Demonstrations and other media events also make it far more difficult for lawmakers to ignore future and current voters.**

### BELIEVE IT OR NOT #3

"To Pee or Not To Pee" was the eye-catching headline in the high school newspaper. This student editorial criticized the policy of locking bathrooms to reduce smoking. The author of this article recruited several friends at a number of other high schools. Together they started a countywide organization called Students Oppose Smoking/Save Our Schools or S.O.S. Students suffering from asthma together with student smokers who were trying to quit held a press conference. They urged their School Board to enforce the "no tobacco use" policy by anyone on school property. Local newspapers and TV stations covered the event and the publicity caused the creation of the School Superintendent's task force that included S.O.S. members and other students. The result: new signs were displayed all over campus and a new teen cessation program was available to those wanting to quit. **TRUE: The principal would have passed the buck to the School Board so the strategy of a countywide group in Maryland paid off. Attracting the attention of school paper as well as that of the local news media were critical.**

## **BELIEVE IT OR NOT #4**

A youth group called Teens on Target conducted a survey of their neighborhood, especially near schools, and then compared their findings with nearby suburban communities. They issued a report that began with the statement: "Why can a kid get a gun in a few hours, but have to take a bus outside the neighborhood to buy school supplies?" This powerful sound bite got picked up by the news media. This youth group persuaded the major city paper to stop running ads for guns in their newspaper. With this momentum, several Teens on Target members testified before the City Council, urging passage of several local gun control laws. Lobbyists for the National Rifle Association were among those who testified in opposition. These young activists helped get a trigger lock and also a gun tracing ordinance passed in their city. **TRUE: This group based in Oakland, CA collected evidence about the problem, created a hard-hitting quote for the news media, and went face-to-face with politicians.**

## **BELIEVE IT OR NOT #5**

A high school student organized a teach-in after school and mobilized a group of 20 peers to lobby state legislators. The issue was that women earn only 66 cents for every dollar a man makes. On one of many visits to the Statehouse during their three-month campaign, they passed out cookies—some large and others 34% smaller—with messages such as "Aren't we worth it? Vote yes on HB 81." The result was passage of a new law called the Compensation Pay Study to compare how much males and females earn as state employees. **TRUE: Women's groups in Utah provided information and intelligence about state politics but the students took the lead and created imaginative visuals, visited legislators many times, and never gave up.**



**Believe it or not!**

**NUMBER 1**

**Sixth grade students active in a group called Earth Force conducted a five-month survey of the 10-square block area around their school. They photographed 45 abandoned lots and old rundown buildings. Then they created a survey with about 12 questions and went door-to-door asking 50 residents for their recommendations.**

**The youth group wrote a report that included their photographs. They arranged a meeting with the Mayor and other city leaders to present their findings. Several months later, the city released a report entitled "Neighborhood Revitalization Plan," based on many of the student proposals.**

**Cleanup began. Some dangerous buildings were demolished. A community garden and mural were created.**



**Believe it or not!**

**NUMBER 2**

**Students were disgusted by the dirty school bathrooms. Also, a few guys wanted doors to be placed on the individual stalls in the boys' bathroom. They created a petition and during lunch they got their friends and classmates to sign their petition and collected 327 names. The petition was handed over to their principal who said she would consider it.**

**Within two weeks, a "Rules & Responsibilities" poster appeared in all the bathrooms but there were no other signs of change. The group asked for a formal meeting with the principal and the result was more soap and toilet paper but the proposal for doors was tossed out as too costly.**





**Believe it or not!**

**NUMBER 3**

**A group of teens were angry that in-line skaters and skateboarders were not allowed to use sidewalks, parking lots and just about every other stretch of pavement. They decided to go complain to the folks who make the rules. They found out that their Town Council allows anyone of any age to speak for 2 minutes on any topic. Several of the boarders made short statements asking for some place to skate.**

**Three of the teenagers were selected to serve on a parks committee and worked with architects and others to design a skatepark which has become a reality.**



**Believe it or not!**

**NUMBER 4**

**An Eco-Troop was determined to protect the scrub jay, a bird so friendly that it eats peanuts from an open hand. Ignoring the huge difficulty of trying to preserve the wildlife habitat for this endangered species, these 4th and 5th graders first persuaded their parents to care. One girl's mother, a real estate agent thought the idea was crazy and suggested "scrub jay soup," but she then became convinced after a bird sat on her head.**

**The students along with their parents and environmental groups made dozens of presentations to the School Board, the County Commission, their Member of Congress, and the head of the U.S. Interior Department. Ultimately, the Eco-Troop received a matching government grant of more than \$200,000 from the Fish & Wildlife Service. The real estate agent also helped persuade private owners not to build houses on their land but to sell it for this wildlife sanctuary.**



**Believe it or not!**

**NUMBER 5**

**A school club heard a guest speaker talk about a proposal for a statewide Clean Indoor Air law. Several of the students talked with their advisor about how they could get involved. They decided to plan a rally at the Capitol. About 4 months later, 1500 students from cities around the state took buses to the state legislature. They brought handmade banners and passed out air fresheners with the message "We Want Clean Air." During the rally, the Governor was spotted and brought to the podium where he added his support for the legislation.**

**The previous three years, opposition by restaurants and tobacco companies had defeated similar bills. One state senator said he never got so much mail on one bill before: 6 letters. The law passed.**

## **FACILITATOR'S BELIEVE IT or NOT BACKGROUNDER (TWEENS)**

### **BELIEVE IT OR NOT #1**

Sixth grade students active in a group called Earth Force conducted a five-month survey of the 10-square block area around their school. They photographed 45 abandoned lots and old rundown buildings. Then they created a survey with about 12 questions and went door-to-door asking 50 residents for their recommendations. The youth group then wrote a report that included their photographs. They arranged a meeting with the Mayor and other city leaders to present their findings. Several months later, the city released a report entitled "Neighborhood Revitalization Plan," based on the student proposals. Cleanup began. Some dangerous buildings were demolished. A community garden and mural were created. **TRUE: Yes, in South Carolina, the Mayor of Charleston was so impressed by the students, he continued to have them participate in future planning meetings.**

### **BELIEVE IT OR NOT #2**

Students were disgusted by the dirty school bathrooms. Also, a few guys wanted doors to be placed on the individual stalls in the boys' bathroom. They created a petition and during lunch they got their friends and classmates to sign their petition and collected 327 names. The petition was handed over to their principal who said she would consider it. Within two weeks, a "Rules & Responsibilities" poster appeared in all the bathrooms but there were no other signs of change. The group asked for a formal meeting with the principal and the result was more soap and toilet paper but the proposal for doors tossed out as too costly. **FALSE: These students might have succeeded if they got the support of several teachers and parents, possibly the PTA. In Iowa, a middle school student did persuade the school board to remodel the restrooms to meet requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.**

### **BELIEVE IT OR NOT #3**

A group of teens were angry that in-line skaters and skateboarders were not allow to use sidewalks, parking lots and just about every other stretch of pavement. They decided to go complain to the folks who make the rules. They found out that their Town Council allows anyone of any age to speak for 2 minutes on any topic. Several of the boarders made short statements asking for some place to skate. Three of the teenagers were selected to serve on a parks committee and worked with architects and others to design a skatepark and it became a reality. **TRUE: Yes, the young activists in Virginia not only got the idea rolling and helped with the design, but they also succeeded at making sure money was found to support the construction of the facility.**

## **BELIEVE IT OR NOT #4**

An Eco-Troop was determined to protect the scrub jay, a bird so friendly that it eats peanuts from an open hand. Ignoring the huge difficulty of trying to preserve the wildlife habitat for this endangered species, these fourth and fifth graders first persuaded their parents to care. One girl's mother, a real estate agent thought the idea was crazy and suggested "scrub jay soup," but she then became convinced after a bird sat on her head. Students along with their parents and environmental groups made dozens of presentations to the School Board, the County Commission, their Member of Congress, and the head of the U.S. Interior Department. Ultimately, the Eco-Troop received a matching government grant of more than \$200,000 from the Fish & Wildlife Service. The real estate agent also helped persuade private owners not to build houses on their land but to sell it for this wildlife sanctuary. **TRUE: These Florida students didn't care that most everyone said this would be impossible. They had enough supporters and never gave up.** (The video clip #5 features this campaign.)

## **BELIEVE IT OR NOT #5**

A school club heard a guest speaker talk about a proposal for a statewide Clean Indoor Air law. Several of the students talked with their advisor about how they could get involved. They decided to plan a rally at the Capitol. About 4 months later, 1500 students from cities around the state took buses to the state legislature. They brought handmade banners and passed out air fresheners with the message "We Want Clean Air." During the rally, the Governor was spotted and brought to the podium where he added his support for the legislation. The previous three years, opposition by restaurants and tobacco companies had defeated similar bills. One state senator said he never got so much mail on one bill before: 6 letters. The law passed. **TRUE: This happened in Utah and young people were decisive in this win. And yes, a half dozen hand-written letters to a legislators can make an impact!** Video clip #8 features another successful student-organized tobacco control campaign also in Utah.

## FACILTATOR's VIDEO CLIPS BACKGROUNDER

The first batch of video clips is designed for older teens but you may find that some of the selections for younger youth may work well for them too. Between each clip is five seconds of blank tape. Pause between each one to solicit audience reaction and identify effective organizing tactics and advocacy strategies. Then cue to the next clip you decide to show. Also, if you have footage of TV stories about local young activists, I encourage you to show that because it is likely to increase the credibility index.

OLDER TEENS: DESCRIPTION	INTRODUCE CLIP & FOLLOW UP QUESTION	TIME
<b>#1 Youth Board in New Haven, CT advise Police Chief on curfew proposal</b>	This clip is about a group that persuaded their city that a curfew wasn't a good idea . . . The curfew was not adopted. Can you imagine this happening here?	<b>1:30</b>
<b>#2 Student investigators and journalists raise awareness about a toxic dump in this New York community</b>	This footage is about some environmentalists... Eventually the toxic dump got cleaned up and how do you think these students made a difference?	<b>2:30</b>
<b>#3 Students take on controversial issue of abstinence versus sex-education in Lubbock, Texas.</b>	Making waves is not a popular thing to do in this Texas town, especially on this issue... Why do you think these students are gaining support?	<b>2:50</b>
<b>#4 Students advocate for Massachusetts law that bans discrimination at public schools based on sexual orientation.</b>	Other states have followed this successful campaign...What were some of the strategies you noticed in this national news story?	<b>1:30</b>
TWEENS & PRE-TEENS: DESCRIPTION	INTRODUCE CLIP & FOLLOWUP	TIME
<b>#5 Very young Eco-Troop in Florida saves wildlife habitat.</b>	Take a look at this...Why do you think these very young students succeeded in winning over opponents?	<b>1:30</b>
<b>#6 Speech at rally in D.C. on gun violence prevention.</b>	Listen to this speech that was so powerful it became a TV spot...Can you imagine other young people making their voices heard in this way?	<b>0:30</b>
<b>#7 CA students conduct survey and testify about community improvements.</b>	These students went door-to-door asking folks what they like and don't like about their neighborhood.. Why do you think they got such a good response at City Hall?	<b>3:45</b>
<b>#8 Students participate in rally at Utah State Legislature putting cigarettes, chew and cigars behind the counter.</b>	This crowd of students got noticed...It took another year to get this law passed but why did this rally help make that happen?	<b>0:50</b>

**OUR TEAM GAMEPLAN**

Recorder \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Team Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_



**Ideas for School or Community Change . . .**



**First Idea Our Team Will Tackle . . .**



**Our Campaign Name and/or Catchy Slogan . . .**



**Strategies for Recruiting . . .**



**Potential Adult Supporters and Funders . . .**



**Likely Naysayers and Opponents . . .**



**Possible Publicity Strategies (weekly community newspaper, other news media, etc.)**



**Our Immediate First Step (create a mission statement and possible committees such as recruitment, research, policy, publicity, funding/resources) . . .**



## FACILITATOR'S GAMEPLAN BACKGROUNDER

### Ideas for School or Community Change . . .

You may want to write down some of the primary ideas that emerge from each of the teams. These preliminary thoughts may seed ideas among other participants.

### First Idea Our Team Will Tackle . . .

If two teams have similar ideas, encourage them to exchange contact info right away and explore the possibility of working together. Even with geographical challenges, sharing ideas and strategies online or by phone can help build momentum and maintain morale.

### Our Campaign Name and/or Catchy Slogan . . .

You may want to suggest that it is preferable to create a campaign name like “Books Not Bars” or “Education Not Incarceration” or the more light-hearted “Puffless Potties” rather than an alphabet soup name such as YAC -- unless the meaning of the abbreviation is obvious and understandable to the general public.

### Strategies for Recruiting . . .

Word-of-mouth is definitely effective but encourage outreach to students at other schools and youth organizations that can help build a more diverse, representative and powerful group. Besides flyers, posters, presentations, encourage inventive tactics (radio public service announcements, meetup.com-type approach, etc.)

### Potential Adult Supporters and Funders . . .

Don't hesitate to toss out other suggestions, especially organizations and coalitions that youth participants may not even know exist. One good opportunity to obtain up to a \$1,000 grant is Youth Venture ([www.youthventure.org](http://www.youthventure.org))

### Likely Naysayers and Opponents . . .

Apathy can be the most treacherous enemy. Real adversaries – particularly special interest groups or “hired guns” – actually can strengthen resolve rather than intimidate young activists.

### Possible Publicity Strategies (weekly community newspaper, etc.)

Besides identifying youth-oriented media outlets, include stations and newspapers that bigwigs read. At the same time, have some fun discussing unconventional tactics such as ‘Donuts to DJs’ and toilet talk as described in “Youth! The 26% Solution.”

### Our Immediate First Step (create a mission statement, committees, etc.)

The more concrete the better. Even deciding on the time and place for the first meeting should be encouraged.

**PLEASE KEEP ONE GAMEPLAN AND COMPLETE A SECOND COPY TO TURN IN.**

## ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE (Pre-Assessment)

Make up a 5-digit code and write here \_\_\_\_\_ as well as on the other questionnaire.

Just circle most appropriate answer.

<b>Our peers listen to us.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>Most adults listen to young people.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>School administrators will respond in a positive way to student proposals.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>Youth can exercise their consumer power with local businesses.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>Elected officials pay attention to our opinions, even if we are not yet of voting age.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>I think I know enough about how to begin planning a youth-led community action project.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>I know some friends who would like to be involved.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>I am aware of community organizations and resources that could help us.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>I know a few adults who would really support a student initiative.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>I can imagine creating a petition and collecting signatures.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>I could help develop a survey and conduct interviews in the community.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>I would be comfortable contacting local newspapers and stations about our campaign.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>I could help plan a news conference, rally or some type of major event.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>I would like to speak about our issue/proposal before a city council or school board.</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>

## ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE (Post-Assessment)

Write the same 5-digit code from other questionnaire here: \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for circling the most appropriate answer.

**Our peers listen to us.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**Most adults listen to young people.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**School administrators will respond in a positive way to student proposals.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**Youth can exercise their consumer power with local businesses.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**Elected officials pay attention to our opinions, even if we are not yet of voting age.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**I think I know enough about how to begin planning a youth-led community action project.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**I know some friends who would like to be involved.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**I am aware of community organizations and resources that could help us.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**I know a few adults who would really support a student initiative.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**I can imagine creating a petition and collecting signatures.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**I could help develop a survey and conduct interviews in the community.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**I would be comfortable contacting local newspapers and stations about our campaign.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**I could help plan a news conference, rally or some type of major event.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

**I would like to speak about our issue/proposal before a city council or school board.**                      **Agree   Disagree   Undecided**

## Youth Empowerment Web Sites

... find out what other young changemakers are doing around the country!

Act for Change – [www.actforchange.com](http://www.actforchange.com)

Ashoka Innovators for the Public - [www.changemakers.net](http://www.changemakers.net)

Books Not Bars – [www.booksnotbars.org](http://www.booksnotbars.org)

Campaign for Student Involvement – [www.soundout.org](http://www.soundout.org)

Campus Activism – [www.campusactivism.org](http://www.campusactivism.org)

Center for Community Change – [www.communitychange.org](http://www.communitychange.org)

Co/Motion – [www.afj.org](http://www.afj.org)

Do Something – [www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org)

Earth Force – [www.earthforce.org](http://www.earthforce.org)

Free the Children – [www.freethechildren.org](http://www.freethechildren.org)

Gay Lesbian Student Education Network - [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

Global Kids – [www.globalkids.org](http://www.globalkids.org)

Global Youth Action Network – [www.youthlink.org/gyan](http://www.youthlink.org/gyan)

Ignite – [www.ignitegeneration.org](http://www.ignitegeneration.org)

National Youth Rights Association – [www.youthrights.org](http://www.youthrights.org)

Rock The Vote – [www.rockthevote.org](http://www.rockthevote.org)

Student Environmental Action Coalition – [www.seac.org](http://www.seac.org)

Student Press Law Center – [www.splc.org](http://www.splc.org)

Street Law – [www.streetlaw.org](http://www.streetlaw.org)

TakingITGlobal - [www.takingitglobal.org](http://www.takingitglobal.org)

We Interrupt This Message - [www.interrupt.org](http://www.interrupt.org)

What Kids Can Do - [www.whatkidscando.org](http://www.whatkidscando.org)

WireTap Magazine - [www.wiretapmag.org](http://www.wiretapmag.org)

Youth Action Net – [www.youthactionnet.org](http://www.youthactionnet.org)

Youth Noise - [www.youthnoise.org](http://www.youthnoise.org)

Youth Service America – [www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org)

Youth Venture - [www.youthventure.org](http://www.youthventure.org)