

**Frederick Alliance for Youth**  
**Summary of Feedback from Interviews and Focus Groups**

The following represents the most common themes identified through 20 focus groups involving 69 individuals.

Ideas for Programs

- 1) Sports
  - a. Instructional – emphasis on teaching youth to participate in a sport (for example karate instruction or tennis instruction).
  - b. Recreational – supervised sports activities such as basketball and soccer.
  - c. Organized Sports Leagues – operate youth sports leagues according to sports seasons.
- 2) Mentoring
  - a. Caring adults providing leadership through action and relationships with youth.
  - b. Providing access 1:1, in small groups, and in larger group activities to caring adults.
  - c. Providing novel experiences to teach new skills and provide new perspectives.
- 3) Computer Access
  - a. Specific training in computer skills such as word processing, internet research, internet safety, and using specific programs such as MS Office.
  - b. Supervised access to computers for youth to complete homework assignments and to utilize the internet as a research tool.
  - c. Supervised access to computers for recreation (games).
- 4) Gang Prevention/Reduction
  - a. While everything the youth center provides could be linked to preventing gangs, the community need dictates that programming specific to gang prevention and reduction be incorporated into the menu of programs.
- 5) Drama
  - a. Under the direction of a competent adult, youth would select, rehearse, and perform theater productions at community shows.
  - b. Youth could also participate in the writing of the script, set design, marketing, and other aspects of performing plays.
- 6) Music Programs
  - a. Instrument and vocal instruction (individual and group).
  - b. Performances (individual and group) that are open to the community.
- 7) Tutoring
  - a. Subject-specific assistance for struggling students.
  - b. GED preparation classes.
- 8) Homework Club
  - a. Supervised time for completing homework.
  - b. Opportunity for staff to assist with homework.
- 9) Job Development
  - a. Assist older youth in developing job skills (resume writing, interviewing, communication).
  - b. Assist older youth in acquiring jobs.
  - c. Assist older youth in maintaining jobs.
- 10) Time Limited, Topic Focused Groups
  - a. Engaging groups targeting skill development in areas that are problematic for youth.
  - b. Target youth who are struggling with behavior in school and the community.
  - c. Behavior management and cognitive restructuring activities.
- 11) Programs for Parents

- a. Education classes for parents such as child development, health, nutrition.
  - b. Adult education classes such as managing finances and computer training.
  - c. English as a second language classes (ESL).
  - d. Programs for parents during the day.
  - e. Availability to parents – computers, reading room, library, fitness room.
- 12) Art Programs
- a. Art instruction.
  - b. Supervised art expression with regular displays that are available to the community.
- 13) Alternative to Suspension
- a. Provide meaningful daytime activities for students suspended from school.
- 14) Nutrition/Cooking Activities
- a. Teach nutrition/cooking skills and provide skill training by planning and preparing snacks/meals.
- 15) Gardening
- a. Research and teach gardening techniques.
  - b. Plant and maintain gardens for the youth center.
  - c. Could lead to maintaining other community gardens if there is enough interest.

#### Ideas for How the Programs Should Operate

- 1) Must have gym
  - d. There must be access to a gym facility for active programming of large groups of youth.
- 2) Extended Availability of the Facility
  - a. 3:00 until 6:00 is crucial time for programming. Juvenile crime and victimization peak during these hours. Many youth are unsupervised during these hours. Youth who do not have access to positive, healthy connections are more likely to develop negative connections such as gangs.
  - b. Remain open later in the evenings (9:00 on weekdays and 11:00 on weekends). This will allow for older youth who need a positive place to explore their transitions to adulthood.
  - c. Remain open with program accessibility on the weekends. Weekends offer additional opportunities to have a positive impact on youth who are unsupervised or looking to establish connections.
- 3) Need Quality Staff
  - a. Programs are only as good as the people who lead them.
  - b. Program must ensure that the people who will be mentoring our youth must be of the highest caliber.
  - c. Research shows that youth identify the relationships they've built in programs as having the most impact.
- 4) Must hook in the parents
  - a. Parents need to participate in the programs to the extent they are able in order to be supportive of their children.
  - b. Parents need to see a value in what their children are doing with their time.
- 5) Provide Transportation
  - a. Transportation must not be a barrier to accessing services.
- 6) Always Available Child Care for Activities
  - a. Available child care for younger siblings so that older youth can participate in the programs (many youth are charged with caring for their younger siblings).
  - b. Available child care during adult education events.

Other promising Ideas with less than 4 responses

- Employ Older Youth
  - a. Look at opportunities to employ youth at the youth center.
  - b. Develop relationships with local businesses that could employ youth.
- Economic Development
  - a. Create a business that youth manage and are paid wages.
- Driver's Education
  - a. Provide driver's education courses to youth.
- Community Service
  - a. Provide opportunities for youth to participate in community service projects.
- Always Open but no Required Attendance
  - a. Operate as a drop-in center.
  - b. Not an option for younger youth.
  - c. Generate attendance by operating engaging and useful programs.
- Foreign Language/Cultural Awareness Activities for Youth
  - a. Provide opportunities for youth to explore/understand different cultures.