Being intentional about strengthening the relationships among program leaders is important to the vitality and longevity of the program. The key to a successful team is strong leadership. Likewise, it is just as important to determine (and strive for) a vision and purpose for the program in order to achieve meaningful outcomes.

**Program Leadership**

The leadership team, led by a site coordinator, is the most critical element to the success of a program site. There must be leadership to guide your program and keep things running smoothly. The site coordinator is the person ultimately responsible for leading the program and ensuring operational success. The role of site coordinator is both people-oriented and administrative. The site coordinator will use their abilities to encourage, communicate, and organize effectively. Some sites may start with one site coordinator but quickly discover that at least one other site coordinator is necessary. You will want a clear job description for the site coordinator. Review the sample Site Coordinator Job Description in Appendix One, on page 95. Remember that this is just a sample; you will want to adjust the responsibilities and tasks to best suit the needs of your program.

In addition, take the time now to plan for a smooth leadership transition. If the current site coordinator becomes unable to continue in that role, this will mean steps are already in place to ensure the sustainability of the program. The Site Coordinator should use the following prompts as a starting point for planning that transition. These prompts make the assumption that you have already identified your site coordinator. If this is not the case, then skip this section and return to it once your site coordinator has been selected.

The World Vision National Youth Advisory Council (through World Vision U.S. Programs) is comprised of 11 young people between the ages of 16 and 20. This dynamic group of young leaders is responsible for several projects concerning social media, advocacy, and community engagement. They commit to meeting (via teleconference) once a month, as well as throughout the month as needed, for a year.
• Identify at least one other person willing to co-coordinate or serve as an assistant coordinator. Always be on the lookout for potential co-coordinators!
• Determine whether you have the time and energy to commit to serving as the site coordinator for more than one program year.
• Determine how many years you would like to serve as the site coordinator.
• At what point do you think it will be necessary to begin recruiting and cross-training your successor?
• How will you know (what will be the indicators) when you are “burning out”?
• Identify someone you trust who would be willing to tell you when they think it’s time for you to step down as site coordinator.

Have your site coordinator answer all of the above prompts.
Who ______________________________ By when __________

Identify a potential co-coordinator or assistant coordinator.
Who ______________________________ By when __________

If volunteers are unable to commit time each week to serve on a program leadership team, or if, assuming you are the site coordinator, you find yourself in a situation where you’re alone and don’t have a “co-coordinator” to bounce ideas off of, consider forming an advisory council. Advisory councils can meet with you once a month, or once a quarter, to help work through challenges and provide feedback on the program overall. If you decide to form an advisory council, consider inviting youth to serve alongside adults.
Being intentional about strengthening the relationships among program leaders is important to the vitality and longevity of the program. The key to a successful team is strong leadership. Likewise, it is just as important to determine (and strive for) a vision and purpose for the program in order to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Respectful Communication

Good communication skills are critical to successful leadership and team building. Establishing guidelines for respectful communication is a good place to start. When team members have differing opinions or beliefs, guidelines will set the tone for constructive engagement that can develop, rather than divide, your team. The following elements are important to respectful communication, especially in challenging circumstances. Use these or similar guidelines for your team and, as appropriate, your students.

R  Take responsibility for what you say and feel without blaming others; take responsibility for how you say it, so that, as much as possible, others can hear and understand. This is an important guideline for students and adults alike. It is a valuable skill for relationships throughout life. By taking responsibility for what is said, a person owns their feelings and ideas. No one else’s actions give license to a team member to speak destructively, any more than a “dirty look” from one student to another would give license for derogatory name-calling! Taking responsibility for how things are said can help keep team members on topic and act as a reminder to keep language both appropriate and accessible.

S  Be sensitive to different ways of communicating, including silence. In some cultures and families, silence may mean a person is waiting to be specifically called upon, or disagrees with what is being said but remains quiet to save face for someone else. Don’t assume that silence, on the part of your students or colleagues, indicates agreement or that everything is “okay.”

E  Use empathetic listening that includes verbal and nonverbal communication. You can model the kind of empathetic listening that you desire your mentors to use with their students. If a team member comes to you with a concern in the busy moments before students arrive, consider asking if they can talk with you after the students leave, or at another specific time during the week. Empathetic listening excludes watching the clock out of the corner of your eye or thinking nervously about when the team member is going to stop talking so you can get back to work. Rather, empathetic listening requires the time and space to be present, ask clarifying questions, and try to understand the feelings connected with the message. As with many situations in life, talking through a problem and really “being heard” are a big part of coming to a resolution.

P  Ponder what you hear and feel before you speak or respond. With many stakeholders involved in your program—from volunteers to parents to students to school administrators—there are ample opportunities for clashing perspectives and differing opinions. Encouraging people to “hold that thought” and reflect first on what they are feeling and why they are responding before they actually speak fosters a learning environment.
environment that is safer and more conducive to personal growth. This can be especially important at the end of the day, when you are most likely to be meeting. Students and team members will come together after each having faced their own disappointments and challenges throughout the day. Being reminded to pause and ponder before speaking, especially when responding to a disagreement of some sort, can give people time to answer a few internal questions first: “Why do I feel the need to respond? Are my energy and emotions connected to this situation, or are they being carried over from an earlier struggle? Am I contributing to the group’s process or reacting to something new and uncomfortable?”

Examine your own assumptions and perceptions. Students and mentors are likely crossing generational and often cultural gaps when they gather together. Like floating icebergs, each one carries a set of noticeable conditions and considerations above the surface of the water. But these things—language, style, demographic, taste in music, food preferences, etc.—make up only about 10 percent of a person’s culture and the influences that shape their worldview and decision making. The other 90 percent, hidden below the waterline, are the things that form assumptions—religion, understanding of family, taboos, sense of beauty, attitudes toward children, etc. If people don’t examine their underwater assumptions, they are likely to crash into each another rather than gradually, respectfully making space to learn from one another.

Practice **confidentiality**; share **constructive** information that upholds the well-being of the **community**. Team members may disclose sensitive information during training or reflection times, or learn personal information about their students throughout the course of the mentoring relationship. Practicing confidentiality isn’t about keeping secrets as much as it is about sharing only what is constructive for the building up of community.

**Trust** each person to bring their best understanding to the process and facilitate openness. Respectful communication is not about “winning” or being “right.” Generational and cultural differences influence one’s comfort or discomfort with a lack of closure. When sensitive or challenging conversations are engaged in to determine who has the right answer, people end up pitted against one another to defend different positions. This is less likely to result in really hearing one another or benefiting from a new or different perspective. As a leader, you will need to make clear decisions and hold people to certain standards and protocols. But there will also be many things that are up to interpretation or the preferences of the mentors and students. If you can resist the urge to convince team members to think and act like you, you will set an example of trust and flexibility that can translate to the mentor-student relationship and even the approach team members take with academic problem solving.

As a leadership team, review the elements of respectful communication. Identify whether there are points that the team would like to expand or adapt so that the communication guidelines are more meaningful.

Who ______________________________ By when __________
Team Personalities

How well do you know the other people on your leadership team? Personality inventories are a fun and engaging way for teams to learn about each other and work together more effectively. They can also help you identify any “personality gaps” on your team and get you thinking about who can fill those gaps so that your team is balanced.

Activity: Digging Deeper

Goals
The purpose of this activity is to:
• Provide a framework to help the leadership team understand their own and each other’s personality tendencies
• Explore the idea that out-of-balance strengths can become liabilities

Objectives
By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:
• Identify the personality type that most closely resembles them
• Describe one of their strengths and how that strength can become a liability when it is out of balance

Agenda
30 minutes: Introduction and Personality Inventory
20 minutes: Debrief

Materials Needed
• Copies of Discover Your Personality, found on page 98, one for each participant
• Copies of Personality Types Defined, found on page 99, one for each participant
• Copies of Personality Types: In and Out of Balance, found on page 100, one for each participant

When we think about “leaders,” we often think of powerful people who are in the spotlight, like the President. But there are other kinds of leaders who work behind the scenes to bring about change. Some people are more comfortable being quiet leaders. When they hear “program leadership,” they may shy away, thinking that it’s not for them. Chances are, you know someone who you consider to be a “quiet leader” (maybe it’s even you). Having a dynamic leadership team means including people with a variety of skills and strengths. If your leadership team seems to have similar gifts and personalities, consider approaching someone you know who can bring something different to the team and encouraging them to join you. Ensure that each leader has an equal voice in every decision.
**Activity Steps**

1. **Introduction/Inventory**
   Provide each participant with a copy of Discover Your Personality.

2. **Review**
   Review the instructions found on the handout. Then allow 20 minutes (or more, as needed) for the participants to complete the assignment. Ask them to score their inventory upon completion.

3. **Debrief**
   When everyone has completed the inventory, give each participant a copy of Personality Types Defined and Personality Types: In and Out of Balance.

4. **Review**
   Review the information presented in the Personality Types Defined handout with the participants, explaining each personality type, including the description, strengths, and potential weaknesses.

5. **Ask**
   Ask participants if they think the personality type for which they earned the highest score reflects their personality:
   - In what ways does this personality type fit you?
   - In what ways are you different?

6. **Share**
   Share the following information:
   - Each of us has all of these personality strengths in different combinations; each strength is variable and can be adjusted. They need to be brought into balance.
   - Often our greatest personal strengths, when pushed out of balance, become our greatest weaknesses.
   - For instance, let’s say that one of your strengths is tremendous enthusiasm. This can become a weakness if that enthusiasm turns into manipulation.
   - If a particular character trait becomes too extreme, to the point that it irritates or harms others, you can choose to minimize that trait and accentuate other traits.
   - Let’s take a closer look at the four personality types and see what happens when our strengths are pushed out of balance.

7. **Have**
   Have participants take a look at the Personality Types: In and Out of Balance handout to read what happens when strengths get out of balance. As time allows, discuss examples from the handout pointing out how strengths can turn into weaknesses.

8. **Conclude**
   Conclude by having each participant take some time to choose three of their strengths that are highlighted in the Personality Types: In and Out of Balance handout. Ask each person to give examples of how those strengths can help them contribute to the leadership team in a balanced way, and examples of how those strengths can get out of balance and hurt their ability to contribute to the team.
Youth-Adult Partnerships

As you may have gathered by now, youth empowerment is something we take very seriously. We hope that by completing the following activity, you too will begin to understand the power of youth-adult partnerships. This activity can be done at any time, but will be more meaningful if it’s completed early on in the program development process with as many potential program stakeholders as you can rally.

Activity: Powerful Partnerships

The voices and leadership of young people can make a positive impact on the development and implementation of your afterschool program if you are willing to allow it—so set a date for this fun activity and invite as many youth and adults as you can!

Goals

The purpose of this activity is to:

- Stimulate critical, self-reflective thought about the ideas and images that young people and adults have about one another
- Explore the importance of healthy youth-adult partnerships and the challenges involved in developing and sustaining them
- Practice intergenerational communication
- Give team members a positive experience with youth-adult collaboration

There is evidence suggesting that when Jesus first approached the soon-to-be disciples, they were all (with the exception of Peter) under the age of 20! In fact, some scholars believe that many of the disciples were as young as 14 or 15 when they began their discipleship under Jesus’ leadership. How can you use this image of young people as powerful agents of change as you begin to design your academic mentoring program?
Objectives
By the end of this activity, the team will be able to:
• Define “youth-adult partnership”
• Describe the need for healthy youth-adult partnerships
• Give an example of a challenge in developing true youth-adult partnerships and suggest practical ways to overcome the challenge

Agenda
5 minutes: Introductions
10 minutes: Youth-Adult Partnerships Defined
20 minutes: Small Group Brainstorming
20 minutes: Youth-Adult Flip-Flop
5 minutes: Wrap-up

Materials Needed
• Flip chart and dry erase board or chalkboard
• Markers and dry erase markers/chalk
• Masking tape (to tape separate pieces of paper on the wall)
• Copies of Hart’s Ladder of Participation (one per participant), found on page 97
• Copies of Plus-Minus-Interesting Evaluation Form (one per participant), found on page 131

Activity Preparation
• Identify a facilitator to lead this activity if you prefer not to lead it yourself. This should be someone who is an advocate for youth-adult partnerships.
• Set a date and time, identify a location.
• Invite youth (defined as ages 10-24). If you want youth participation, you’ll need to make sure you share with them what the goals and objectives are for the activity. You may even say that the activity is about putting adults and youth on a level playing field.
• Invite adults. Be sure to remind the adult guests beforehand that their role is to work with the youth participants during the activity—not to dominate or lead them.
• Write the agenda, goals, and objectives on flip chart paper or the board
• Write the following definition on flip chart paper or the board: Youth-adult partnerships bring youth and adults together to work collaboratively to foster change; these partnerships are characterized by mutual respect as youth and adults teach, learn, and make decisions together.
Activity Steps

1. **Introductions**
   Have everyone introduce themselves.

2. **Youth-Adult Partnerships Defined**
   Introduce the idea of youth-adult partnerships by referring to the definition on the flip chart paper or board. Then offer the following comments:
   - Think of youth-adult partnerships like youth and adults sitting together at a round table.
   - At a boardroom table, someone (usually an adult) sits at the head and everyone else gathers around. At a round table, the participants in the discussion sit together, and all share in the dialogue. All voices are equal. That’s what youth-adult partnerships are about: enabling youth and adults to be at the table together.

3. **Distribute copies of Hart’s Ladder of Participation to each participant. Read through the handout together as a group. Make sure that the participants understand the definition of youth-adult partnerships. Stop for questions and/or clarification if necessary.**

4. **On the board or using flip chart paper in the front of the room, write “Youth-adult partnerships.” Ask participants for key words, phrases, or examples based on the definition and write them down. Some key ideas should include:**
   - Adults sharing power with youth
   - Contributions from all participants
   - Youth as participants in, and not just recipients of, programs
   - Youth having meaningful responsibility

5. **Small Group Brainstorming**
   Divide youth and adult participants into groups (at least one adult and one young person per group). Provide each group with a sheet of flip chart paper and a few markers. Ask the groups to do a quick brainstorm response to the following questions, recording every idea on the piece of paper:
   - What could a group of adults gain by involving youth in their work and decision making as they seek to bring positive change to their community?
   - What could a group of youth gain by involving adults in their work and decision making as they seek to bring positive change to their community?
   - What makes it difficult for youth and adults to work together as true partners with equal voices?
   - What are the practical things we can do to overcome these challenges?

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**to be heard**

Inviting youth to serve on your program leadership team sends a powerful message: We think what you have to say is important and we believe you have gifts and talents that will strengthen our team! You have an opportunity to mentor young people and help develop their leadership skills. What a great way to help prepare them for life beyond school!
6. After 15 minutes, ask a member of each group to post their flip chart sheet at the front of the room and present their ideas. Call out the benefits of youth and adults working together that are being identified.

7. **Youth-Adult Flip-Flop**
   Next, tell each group that they have 10 minutes to come up with two short skits (a minute or less each). The first skit should be a positive portrayal of youth-adult partnership, while the second should be an expression of a negative youth-adult partnership. The only rule is that the adults must play the young people and the young people must play the adults!

8. Give the groups 10 minutes to prepare their skits. Then invite each group to make their dramatic presentation. After each presentation, briefly discuss how the interactions compare to what the participants commonly experience.

9. **Wrap-up**
   Remind everyone of the benefits of youth and adults working together to bring about positive change in the community, and thank everyone for their willingness and openness to participating in the activity.

10. Distribute copies of the Plus-Minus-Interesting Evaluation Form to each participant. Ask them to take a few minutes to complete the form.

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**think about it**

After participating in the Powerful Partnerships activity, think about what new insights might inform how you and your leadership team engage. What surprised you the most about what you learned from the activity?