



Eco-cycle of Group Development

GROWTH CYCLE OF YOUTH ADVISORY BOARDS

Foster care youth advisory boards have a natural growth cycle that is similar to that of a forest. Seeds are planted. Saplings grow. With support, those saplings grow into trees, and those trees stand together and create a forest of youth and alumni voice.

But it doesn't stop there. Forest fires happen. Adult supporters are lost due to staff turnover. The youth themselves are mobile; entire cohorts might leave to pursue college. This is a natural group dynamics eco-cycle – but it drastically undermines the long-term sustainability of each individual youth board, and leads to boards starting and stopping, and then starting from scratch again.

Two factors that can undermine Youth Advisory Board sustainability are:

- 1.) Staff turnover
- 2.) Youth turnover

The adult supporter has a vitally important role to play when it comes to sustaining the local board and facilitating YAB budget discussions with youth. When the person entrusted with the role of “adult supporter” of a youth changes, it can take time for a new person to be identified, and for that person to build trust with youth.

The OHIO YAB is working to create an ongoing annual training mechanism to address the natural growth cycle of Youth Advisory Boards