

Connect, Learn and Power Up: Squad Goals!

Ariam Mogos

Global Kids

New York City holds a plethora of opportunities for youth in the digital media and learning space, created by Hive NYC and other networks which attempt to support the principles of connected learning and effective brokering. Members of these networks agree that for youth to continue to organically develop their interests and skills, adults and peers must play active roles in brokering rich learning experiences and access to robust social networks (Ching and Santo, 2015, p.5). Research has shown that through relationship-building with high-resource adults and educators, youth can attain information on how other worlds function, enter meaningful social roles, and access opportunities which build their social capital (Sullivan and Larson, 2009, p.100). Although relationships with knowledgeable high-resource adults and educators who understand youth's interests and goals can be highly beneficial, they don't come without challenges. High-resource adults and educators typically have more knowledge, power and experience, and interactions with youth, whether they take the form of collaborative activities, access to internships or presentations, are approached in ways youth can feel are patronizing or over-controlling (Sullivan and Larson, 2009, p.101). High-resource adults and educators more often than not, lack the skills which allow them to work with youth on a platform of equality and mutual respect, which can lead to alienating youth and failure in developing critical relationships (Sullivan and Larson, 2009, p.102). A key ingredient in brokering opportunities successfully requires high-resource adults and educators to redesign partnerships with youth to reflect and acknowledge them as resources with meaningful contributions (Sullivan and Larson, 2009, p.101). Moreover, a heavy emphasis in the digital media and learning field has been placed on the

participation of high-resource adults and educators, but there has not been enough focus on the development and role of high-resource youth in brokering successful opportunities for other youth.

As a participant in the *Power Brokers: Building Youth Social Capital through Connected Learning* workshop, Global Kids will contribute examples of best practices and lessons learned from the Young Innovators Squad (aka Young Hackers), a youth-led initiative which engages underrepresented youth across NYC in the fields of technology and media. A project of the Hive Learning Network and designed and implemented by Global Kids, this model of youth empowerment and leadership demonstrates how high-resource adults and educators can support connected learning and successful brokering processes to build youth social capital. The youth leading the Young Innovators Squad (aka Young Hackers) have become powerful brokers in creating viable pathways between various spaces (school, friends, interests and professional opportunities) to engage other youth in the initiative. Design features of the initiative include interest-driven and culturally-relevant workshops around technological fluency, networking opportunities between youth, space for youth presentations and feedback sessions, access to technology and media professionals, and resources for other digital media and learning opportunities through an active Facebook community. Global Kids will also share strategies on how to overcome intergenerational barriers to work in partnership with youth, and support youth leaders as catalysts of change in their communities. Design features of the collaboration between educators and youth have

included unstructured collaborative activities, undefined role relationships, weekly google hangout calls and more.

References Cited

1. Sullivan, P. J., & Larson, R. W. (2009). Connecting Youth to High-Resource Adults: Lessons From Effective Youth Programs. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 25(1), 99-123. doi:10.1177/0743558409350505
2. Ching, D., Santo, R., Hoadley, C. M., & Pepler, K.A. (2015). *On-Ramps, Lane Changes, Detours and Destinations: Building Connected Learning Pathways in Hive NYC through Brokering Future Learning Opportunities*. Accessed: <http://hivenyc.org/wp-content/uploads/Hive-Research-Lab-2015-Community-White-Paper-Brokering-Future-Learning-Opportunities.pdf>