

Hart's Ladder: Classroom

The purpose of this document is to provide detail about Hart's Ladder of Participation by illustrating concrete youth and adult actions in a classroom environment at each rung of youth participation. It is our hope that youth and adults will be able to use this tool to identify their current location on Hart's Ladder in regards to classroom interactions and spur conversations about how to increase youth involvement and youth voice in the classroom and beyond.

8

Youth initiated shared decisions with adults:

Youth-led activities, in which decision-making is shared between youth and adults working as equal partners.

7

Youth initiated and directed:

Youth-led activities with little input from adults.

6

Adult initiated shared decisions with youth:

Adult-led activities, in which decision-making is shared with youth.

5

Consulted and informed:

Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions.

4

Assigned, but informed:

Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role.

3

Tokenism:

Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback.

2

Decoration:

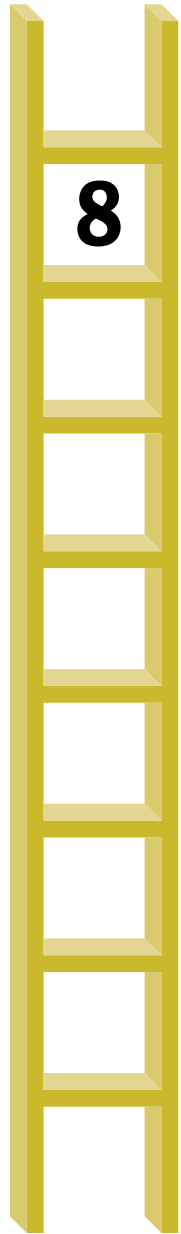
Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned.

1

Manipulation:

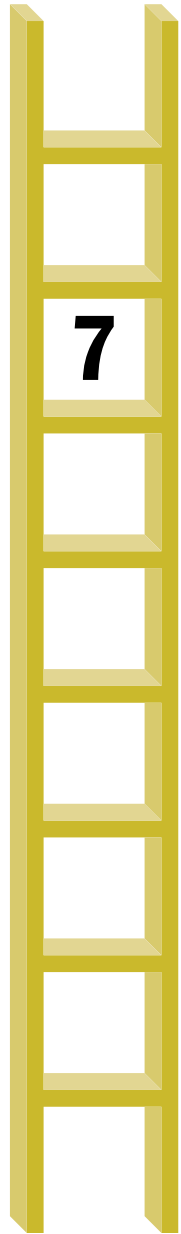
Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding the purpose of the activities.

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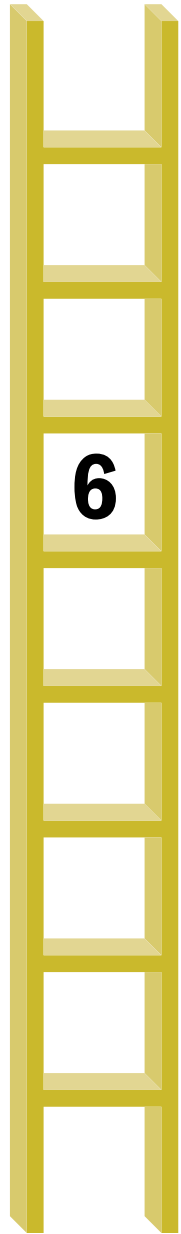
	Youth / Student Actions in a Classroom	Adult / Teacher Actions in a Classroom	Classroom Service-Learning Example
<p>Rung 8: Youth initiated shared decisions with adults ***</p> <p>Youth-led activities, in which decision-making is shared between youth and adults working as equal partners.</p>	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine ideas for the activity • Invite adults to join them in making decisions about the project • Implement the activity • Work together with adults to evaluate activity and make changes for future projects 	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, adults:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as a resource for youth as they plan an activity • Are consulted by youth to make decisions in partnership • Serve as support for youth while they facilitate their activity • Work together with youth to evaluate activity and make changes for future projects • Trust in the leadership of young people 	<p>After a unit on poverty, students are passionate about helping their community and discover a need for increased donations to the local food pantry. They partner with their teacher, the administrative staff at their school, and the food pantry to host a food drive. After a successful event, the students, principal, teacher, and food pantry coordinator meet to evaluate and develop a strategy to make this an annual event focused on ensuring necessary items are donated and the food pantry has adequate resource.</p>

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	Youth / Student Actions in a Classroom	Adult / Teacher Actions in a Classroom	Classroom Service-Learning Example
<p>Rung 7: Youth initiated and directed</p> <p>Youth-led activities with little input from adults.</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">7</p>	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine idea for activity • Implement activity • Evaluate activity • Work independently from adults, which might result in missed opportunities as a result of the lack of true partnership 	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, adults:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support youth decisions and implementation • Trust in the leadership of young people • Are likely not consulted by youth about planning, implementation, and/or evaluation of the activity 	<p>A teacher tells students that they have 30 minutes each class period for two weeks to complete a service-project, and that they will be developing and implementing it on their own. The students discuss possibilities and recognize issues of poverty and food scarcity in their community. The students research poverty in their community and reach out to local food pantries to determine what needs exist, then they create lists of people they know who could donate food. Each student goes to the people on their list, explains their project, and collects food. The students ask their teacher to help drive their donations to the pantry, followed by a brief presentation to their teacher about their project and why they want to do it again next year.</p>

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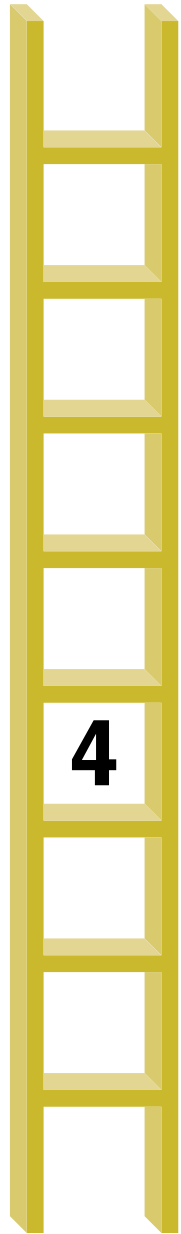
	Youth / Student Actions in a Classroom	Adult / Teacher Actions in a Classroom	Classroom Service-Learning Example
<p>Rung 6: Adult initiated shared decisions with youth</p> <p>Adult-led activities, in which decision-making is shared with youth</p>	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might determine topics or provide input about decision-making on adult-determined topics • Share decision-making power with adults • Understand the process of planing and implementing an activity • Provide input and opinions that are treated seriously by adults • Might be asked to provide opinions about evaluation that will be used to inform future activities 	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, adults:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take youth input into account • Plan the activity while being heavily influenced by youth voice, opinions, interests, and preferences • Frequently create space for youth input on adult-decided topics at planning and implementation • Might create space for youth to evaluate or give feedback on an activity that is used to inform future activities 	<p>A teacher prepares a two-week unit on community and helping others in preparation, the teacher asks each student to write down three issues they see in their community. Many students wrote about poverty and food insecurity. The teacher decides to have a food drive. Students research and choose a pantry near their school. The teacher sets up a site visit, and the class goes and talks with the food pantry coordinator about what type of foods they need and who they serve.</p> <p>Students develop lists of people they know who could donate food. Each student goes to the people on their list to explain the project and collect food.</p> <p>After the project, the teacher sets aside a class period for reflection and evaluation of the project. He asks his students what worked and what they think should be changed for next time and documents those answers.</p>

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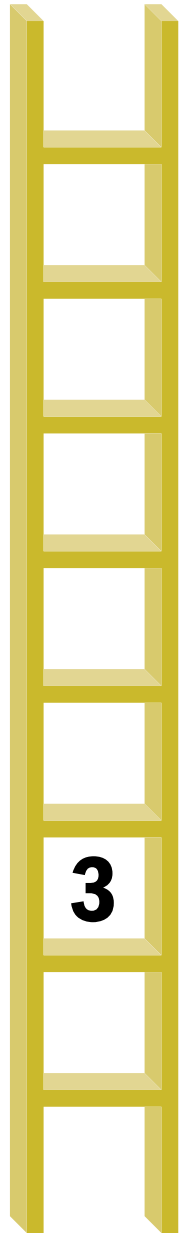
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<p>Rung 5: Consulted and informed</p> <p>Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions</p>	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give advice to adults about the activities and projects in the classroom • Understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously by adults • Might be asked to provide opinions about evaluation that will be used to inform future activities 	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, adults:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design activities are projects • Consider youth advice when planning • Lead implementation 100% • Might create space for youth to evaluate or give feedback on an activity that is used to inform future activities 	<p>A teacher prepares a week-long lesson plan about food scarcity and poverty. Students are asked to develop ideas to address these issues. The teacher suggests doing a food drive with all four 6th grade classrooms for the Helping Hands Pantry and the students agree. Students develop lists of people they know who could donate food. Each student goes to the people on their list to explain the project and collect food. After the project, the teacher asks students to write a 100-word reflection with suggestions for future food drives and also holds a brief discussion to talk about the food drive and suggestions for next time.</p>

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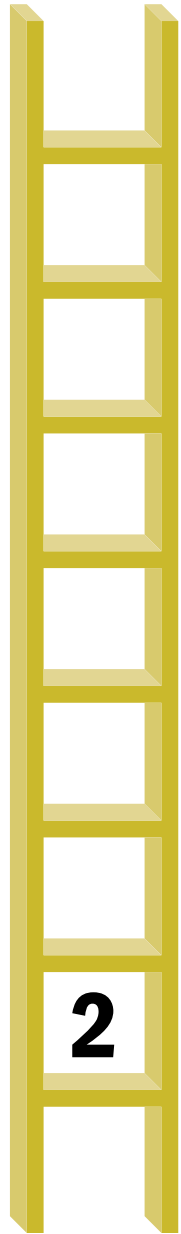
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<p>Rung 4: Assigned, but Informed Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role</p>	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the purpose of the activities they are doing • Youth did not plan the activity; it has been assigned • Actively participating in what has been assigned • Have a more meaningful (rather than decorative/passive role in the activity) • Might be asked to provide opinions about evaluation, but it might not be used to inform future activities 	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, adults:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide the activities for the students • Considers students' interests and learning styles, makes decisions without youth input • Allow and encourage youth to be active participants and aware of the activity's purpose • Might create space for youth to evaluate or give feedback on an activity; the feedback might be used to make only surface-level changes or might not be used to inform future activities 	<p>A teacher decides to hold a food drive in his classroom for a local pantry. She prepares a week-long lesson plan about food scarcity and poverty. Students are asked to come up with lists of people they know who could donate food items. Each student goes to the people on their list to explain the project and collect food. After the project, the teacher passes out a sheet a paper asking students to write a 100 word reflection with suggestions for future food drives.</p>

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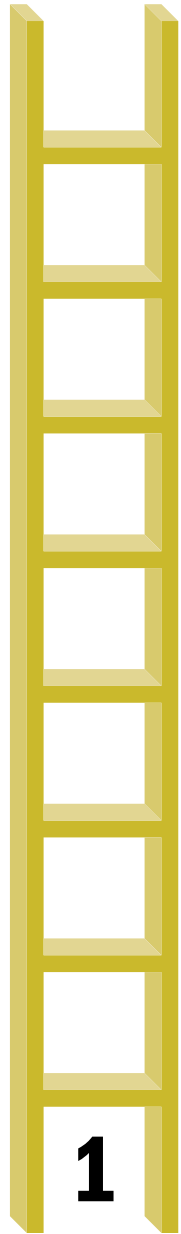
	Youth / Student Actions in a Classroom	Adult / Teacher Actions in a Classroom	Classroom Service-Learning Example
<p>Rung 3: Tokenism * Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback</p>	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the purpose of the activities they are doing • Are not quite passive, but not active • Have little power in decision-making • Have little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions and ideas • Might be asked to represent all youth without the opportunity to prepare or consult their peers 	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, adults:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In control of the activity and the outcome • Might ask youth for minimal input during planning, implementation, and evaluation, but will not take input seriously or will only take very surface-level input • Say they give youth a voice, but youth have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it 	<p>A teacher decides to hold a food drive in his classroom for a local pantry. He tells the students what a food drive is and where the food will go. He facilitates a discussion of different pantries in the area, and asks for suggestions, even though he has chosen one ahead of time. He sends a letter home with each student, asking parents/guardians for donations. After the food is collected, he writes to his local paper and a reporter comes to the classroom to take a photo of the students and interviews two of the thirty children about their views of food scarcity in the community.**</p>

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	Youth / Student Actions in a Classroom	Adult / Teacher Actions in a Classroom	Classroom Service-Learning Example
<p>Rung 2: Decoration * Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned</p>	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the purpose of the activity • Are passively learning • Are expected to follow directions without questions asked • Participate without awareness of how they could contributing • Are not consulted about the effectiveness of the activity or asked to assist in evaluation 	<p><i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, adults:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not allow youth to participate in the planning of the activity • May not have awareness about how youth could be contributing • 100% in control of the activity and the outcome • Explain the purpose of the activity to youth • Use youth for the activity but in an indirect way with no real purpose • Do not allow youth to participate in the evaluation of the activity 	<p>A teacher decides to hold a food drive in her classroom for a local pantry. She tells the students what a food drive is and where the food will go. She sends a letter home with each student, asking parents/guardians for donations. **</p>

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	Youth / Student Actions in a Classroom	Adult / Teacher Actions in a Classroom	Classroom Service-Learning Example
Rung 1: Manipulation * Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding the purpose of the activities	<i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, youth:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are solely participants of the activity • Do not understand the purpose of the activity • Are passively learning • Expected to follow directions without questions asked • Are not consulted about the effectiveness of the activity or asked to assist in evaluation 	<i>At this level of Hart's Ladder, adults:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not allow youth to participate in the planning of the activity • May not have awareness about how youth could be contributing • Are 100% in control of the activity and outcome • Do not allow youth to participate in the evaluation of the activity 	A teacher decides to hold a food drive in his classroom for a local pantry. The teacher sends a letter home with each student, asking parents/guardians for donations. **

* It is important to remember that manipulation, decoration, and tokenism (rungs 1-3) are not examples of youth participation; they are examples of youth non-participation. Adults have the choice and power to move away from those methods towards meaningful youth participation.

** The service-learning examples for manipulation, decoration, and tokenism (rungs 1-3) are not genuine service-learning as they lack youth voice. Youth presence in planning, implementing, and evaluating is imperative for a true service-learning project.

*** Youth initiated shared decisions with adults (rung 8) is the final rung because it is sustainable. Some learning theories suggest that student independence, which is characterized by rung 7, is the desired goal of instruction. However, rung 8 takes into account that people age. When young people become adults, we need them to be able to and comfortable with consulting others and acknowledging that others have useful knowledge. In the future, adults with this foundation will be more comfortable giving decision-making power to young people, which would sustain the work of youth leadership.

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Works Consulted

- Fletcher, Adam. "Ladder of Youth Voice." *The Freechild Project*, 2016. <https://freechild.org/ladder-of-youth-participation/>. Accessed 15 November 2016.
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