

# Youth-Adult Partnership Guide

For a U.S. Department of Peace



## Table of Contents:

Introduction.....	1
Finding Interested Youth.....	1
Presenting the Department of Peace to a Young Audience.....	2
The Different Levels of Youth Involvement.....	3
Starting a Student Peace Alliance Chapter.....	3
Locating Materials.....	4
Developing a Partnership.....	4
Ideas for Working with Student Peace Alliance Youth.....	5

## **Introduction**

As students have begun organizing nationwide in support of a U.S. Department of Peace, it has become increasingly evident that youth-adult partnerships are creating the mutually beneficial alliances necessary to move this campaign forward. Students find the support and expertise adults offer invaluable, while adults recognize the useful energy and creativity that passionate young people contribute to the movement for a Department of Peace. This guide is a compilation of ideas generated by adults and youth involved with The Peace Alliance who have had experience working in youth-adult partnerships. We hope this guide will provide valuable insights to those interested in reaching out to the younger members of their communities to support them in working towards the creation of a U.S. Department of Peace.

## **Finding Interested Youth**

While we encourage you to use your own judgment and creativity in finding organizations that may have youth interested in the idea of a Department of Peace, we want to share three areas of success we have found thus far: colleges and universities, high schools, and religious institutions. The following information is meant to support you in finding interested youth in each of those categories.

*Colleges and Universities:* Over three hundred colleges in the United States currently have Peace and Conflict Studies programs, making colleges an ideal place to find youth who may be interested in supporting the campaign to create a Department of Peace. If you are interested in starting a Student Peace Alliance chapter at a college that has a peace studies program, we suggest contacting a like-minded professor and providing him or her with information about the Department of Peace and the Student Peace Alliance. To find the contact information for a faculty member, begin by searching online or at the college website. If you are unable to find what you are looking for, do not hesitate to pay the campus a visit in person and share your interest with the administrative office staff.

Another approach is to contact existing student organizations such as Amnesty International, College Young Democrats, College Young Republicans, Peace groups, Environmental Clubs, and other related organizations. These students already have interest in activism and may want to create a Student Peace Alliance affiliate group within their existing organization or create a separate Student Peace Alliance. Again, check online to see if you can find the meeting times of the student organizations or a student contact you can approach about the Student Peace Alliance.

*High Schools:* Much like colleges, high schools students can be approached either through faculty or directly, via existing youth organizations. If you would like to approach the faculty, we suggest first contacting teachers of Civics, Environmental Studies, Social Studies, English, or History. We have had Math teachers start high school groups too, so if at first you don't succeed, keep trying! Like colleges, most schools have

faculty contacts online. If you cannot find phone numbers or email addresses for teachers, contact the school's office and see what advice they can provide. Try to focus on Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior classes if possible.

Again, existing student organizations can provide a great starting point. Look for political activism groups, environmental groups, volunteerism groups, or others that may have interest in a Department of Peace. Contact the faculty advisor and see if you can give a presentation to the group about the Department of Peace and the Student Peace Alliance.

*Religious Groups:* Lately, adults have found interested youth in their places of worship. Most religions foster and promote ideas of peace, so the Department of Peace may really resonate with the youth of your religious community. If your religious institution has a youth group, consider giving a presentation about the Department of Peace and Student Peace Alliance and see if anyone may have interest in starting a chapter.

## **Presenting the Department of Peace to a Young Audience**

As with any presentation, it is crucial to know your audience. Supplementing this guide are two general templates of Power Point Presentations that will work well with high school-aged youth and college-aged youth, but we encourage you to augment the presentations to match the interests of the group you are approaching. If you are presenting to a statistics class for instance, consider emphasizing the statistical analysis of violence's impact upon U.S. communities. If you are speaking to a volunteerism group such as Interact Club or Amnesty International, perhaps you might focus upon the strain violence puts upon the nonprofit organizations of the United States. For a government or politics class, you could emphasize how this campaign is really the beginning of a historic movement, just like those for woman's suffrage and civil rights. Think creatively, and consider your audience!

In general, we suggest using statistics and information emphasizing the impact of violence upon the youth community. We have provided you with some example statistics in the two presentations accompanying this guide, but for even more impact, you may want to find statistics specific to your state, county, or city. This way, the students you are approaching will really begin to see the impact of violence in their communities and the need for a Department of Peace.

While using a Power Point Presentation is great for keeping the attention of your audience, it is not necessary, so please do whatever feels most appropriate to you. Some adults prefer to just enter schools with their own passion and a handful of fliers, so if that seems more your style, feel free to do so.

One great tool in capturing the interest of students is to end your presentation with an "action item," some easy activity for interested youth to feel like they accomplished

something to move the campaign forward. An easy action item that works well after presentations is the writing of postcards to Congress. This simple activity will allow students to really focus on articulating the need for a Department of Peace while emphasizing the action that needs to be taken by Congress to have the bill passed. You may want to have postcards as well as the relevant addresses on hand to get things rolling.

After a presentation, we recommend you pass around a sign-in sheet for interested individuals to write down their contact information (name, email address, phone number, and congressional district if known). That way, you can contact them later for specific information about how to start a Student Peace Alliance chapter and how to become more involved in the campaign.

## **The Different Levels of Youth Involvement**

There is no one right way to become involved in the campaign to establish a Department of Peace. While some youth might see the Student Peace Alliance as the perfect organization to begin on their campuses, others might just prefer becoming involved in the adult campaign in their areas and offering support in that manner. Allow students flexibility in choice of involvement so that they can support the campaign in any way that feels right to them.

## **Starting a Student Peace Alliance Chapter**

If a youth seems interested in formally starting a chapter, please provide him or her with the email address of the Director of the Student Peace Alliance (Currently Aaron Voldman) at [spa@thepeacealliance.org](mailto:spa@thepeacealliance.org). The Director of the Student Peace Alliance will inform interested students how to set up an organization and will connect them with individuals who can provide the support necessary for beginning new chapters. The Director can provide a framework for new Student Peace Alliance chapters containing “best practices” from successful chapters around the nation. For the most part, Student Peace Alliances are independent entities. However, the Peace Alliance leadership will occasionally check in with the chapter to notify them of upcoming events and to see if they need resources or support. When organizing they will generally function on their own aided by the support of the thriving Student Peace Alliance network.

## Locating Materials

A number of materials can be found at [www.thepeacealliance.org](http://www.thepeacealliance.org) and [www.studentpeacealliance.org](http://www.studentpeacealliance.org), but if you do not find sufficient resources to meet your needs, please contact the Operations Director of the Student Peace Alliance at [spa.pr@thepeacealliance.org](mailto:spa.pr@thepeacealliance.org).

## Developing a Partnership

*What is a youth-adult partnership?* A youth-adult partnership is a mutually beneficial joint effort of adults and youth working together in support of a common goal. In a partnership, both the adult and youth share responsibility and work together to make decisions.

*How do you become an adult partner?* Once you have found young people you are interested in working with, a collaborative meeting is recommended where you will have the opportunity to learn about your partner's ideas for the campaign by asking questions and exchanging ideas. Ask the youth about their goals, what they like to do, their suggestions for addressing identified needs, and what kinds of support from adults would be helpful. In this way, you will empower them to achieve their own goals for peace, while guiding them with information on the needs of the campaign.

*General tips for working with youth:*

1. Share the responsibility of leadership. Provide guidance, but avoid total control.
2. Listen carefully to youth and try to understand their perspective.
3. Provide meaningful roles for youth. We have discovered the most profound impact youth can have is when they are included in meaningful ways.
4. Share work activities, even tedious ones. This will make youth feel included, take ownership, and allow them to contribute meaningfully to the campaign.
5. Treat young people as equals.
6. Keep youth informed about activities. If you're planning an activity of your own, encourage youth to attend or even have them take a role in planning the event.
7. Some students need less guidance than others and it's important for adult partners to appreciate their need for minimal direction.
8. Remember students have many different responsibilities. While all attend classes, they may also have extracurricular activities, work requirements, tests coming up, or social engagements—all while trying to make the world a more peaceful place.
9. Communication is key.

## **Ideas for Working with Student Peace Alliance Youth:**

*Youth as representatives:* When approaching City Councils, businesses, or elected officials, youth make fine spokespersons for the Department of Peace. Because they are most directly affected by violence and filled with energy, young people can make powerful representatives leaving lasting impressions.

*Youth/Adult Collaborations:* Events collaboratively planned by both adults and youth provide great inspiration. Consider working together on upcoming activities and involving the Student Peace Alliance community to share ideas and engage in the planning process.

*Independent Youth Collaborations:* Sometimes, all that is needed for a great idea to take flight is a small amount of resources. If a Student Peace Alliance group wants to plan an independent youth event, they may need resources unavailable to them such as access to money, media, or transportation. This is where working with the adult community can really advance the cause as it opens doors to corporate sponsorships and community aid in making their goals a reality.

*Adult Organized Events:* Even if youth are not involved in the planning of an event, they can provide support with attendance by bringing friends and members of the local Student Peace Alliance. Having youth at these events helps to foster the youth-adult partnership by giving everyone the opportunity to talk and enjoy the community that they are building.