

ALLIANCE OVERVIEW

Minnesota Alliance With Youth was established in 1997 as a means for youth—and organizations that serve youth—to actively network, share resources, and collaborate on innovative strategies that promote youth leadership and advocacy. In order to ensure that ALL youth can achieve success in life, three of our highest priorities are to promote academic success, increase civic engagement and strengthen youth voice. As a leading affiliate of the America's Promise Alliance, we are uniquely and powerfully positioned to influence and support Minnesota communities as they work with and for youth to provide the Five Promises: Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, Effective Education and Opportunities to Help Others.

Our work is accomplished by an incredible network of partners that include statewide organizations, schools and communities. Each year over 60 AmeriCorps Promise Fellows, their supervisors, and local organizations in communities across Minnesota collaborate to focus on strategies that leverage broad support for high quality, evidenced-based, results-oriented and sustainable programs. This quest to improve the well-being of young people is achieved by:

- ▶ Connecting youth to caring adults who serve as mentors, tutors and allies in building strong, authentic youth and adult partnerships;
- ▶ Convening state, regional and local networking opportunities that bring youth and adults together to share resources and best practices in education, youth development and volunteer mobilization; and
- ▶ Building broad-based, school/community partnerships made up of faith-based and civic organizations, businesses, parents, policy makers, nonprofits and government agencies.



Priority Areas

1. Promote Academic Success

Our work helps close the racial and economic achievement gaps by:

- ▶ Targeting closure of the achievement gap through increased academic and social support, as well as through greater civic engagement opportunities among youth from immigrant communities, communities of color and low-income areas; and
- ▶ Focusing efforts on youth in the transition years (grades 5–9) in order to intervene early and reach youth before they fall further behind.

In 2007, Minnesota's graduating class saw 80% of white students graduate on time, while students of color graduated at much lower rates: 66% of Asian Pacific Islanders, 41% of American Indians, 41% of Latinos and 41% of African American students graduated on time. These numbers reflect one of the largest achievement gaps in the nation. In 2005, Minnesota white students topped the overall national average of graduation rates by 6 points; in contrast, Minnesota students of color and American Indian students averaged 10 to 17 points below the national average for graduation rates.

(2009 State of Students of Color and American Indian Students Report)



2. Increase Civic Engagement

Our work promotes extensive civic engagement with and for youth by:

- ▶ Engaging youth in over 20 hours of service throughout the year as a means to connect them to their communities and provide opportunities to develop and apply academic and leadership skills in real and meaningful ways;
- ▶ Planning and facilitating Summer of Service opportunities with youth too old for daycare and too young for summer employment;
- ▶ Recognizing outstanding youth community service through the annual Lt. Governor's Red Wagon Awards; and
- ▶ Supporting Global Youth Service Day as a Youth Service America Lead Organization and through coordination of Delta Dental of Minnesota's Serve A Smile grants that fund healthy youth and healthy communities initiatives.

In 2007–2008, 94% of youth participants in Alliance activities reported that “this program was a good way to learn about how youth can make a difference in their community.” In addition, 89% of youth agreed that “Being part of this program made me more interested in community issues that affect us all.”

3. Strengthen Youth Voice & Youth Engagement



Finally, our work cannot exist without the authentic voices of powerful, knowledgeable and talented Minnesota youth. Our work intentionally seeks out ways to strengthen and engage youth in the work of communities, organizations, and government. Our Youth Advisory Council empowers its 20 members and adult sponsors to bring youth and adults together to create sustainable change in communities and address critical needs by:

As one youth reflected when thinking about the effect of young people's opinion on their community, “My voice is like a mouse at a monster truck rally.” Another said, “It [youth voice] doesn't affect my community because someone else, usually older, is always talking.”

- ▶ Conducting a yearly survey of youth issues in order to tap into the attitudes of young people themselves, determine community needs, and target solutions;
- ▶ Developing an annual policy platform of youth issues that guides our work and advises the Minnesota Alliance With Youth board of directors as we determine priorities and strategic goals; and
- ▶ Providing opportunities for thousands of youth to contribute to their communities by exercising their voice in community dialogues, service-learning, service projects, mayors' councils, etc.

Featured Facts

- ▶ We annually host 60–70 AmeriCorps Promise Fellows who work with over 100 active partner organizations, schools, and communities on the front lines of creating positive individual and social change for youth and communities throughout Minnesota.
- ▶ Since 1997, a total of 400 AmeriCorps Promise Fellows have collectively served over 680,000 hours of service and established 300 school-community partnerships—totaling a value of \$12.75 million of service to communities across the state.