

## CitySongs Action Principles\*

### 1: Adults Being There

Kids need adults in their lives; need them to be consistent, steadfast, reliable, and predictable.

### 2: Adult Affection

Kids need enduring affectional relationships with adults who are competent, caring, and consistent.

### 3: Mutual Relationships

Through engaging in continuing give-and-take activity (together with others; engaging the environment on one's own), kids learn to regulate their own emotions and behavior. The actions of each person must be responsive to the other person (people), helping kids develop both self-esteem and respect for "the other." At CitySongs, reciprocity affects kids interacting with staff, with one another, and with such non-personal entities as a sound track, word sheets, and performance venues.

#### a) Adults

Activities with parents are most powerful in fostering, sustaining, or undermining a child's development; parents are likely to be more responsive than anyone else, to their children's needs. Other adults (e.g., relatives; CitySongs staff; teachers; neighbors) can supplement, enhance, or compensate for parental influence in promoting a child's positive development.

#### b) Peers

In joint activities, age-mates and older and younger peers all provide supplementary influence on a child's development. The constructive nature of this influence requires a delicate balance between freedom from adults and adult involvement / monitoring.

### 4: Repetition and Challenge

Activity must become (have the possibility to become) more complex over time, so that it both sustains development (repetition) and also advances development (challenge). Repetition and challenge must be appropriately balanced, to promote development in all participants.

### 5: Stability and Content of Activities

#### a) Stability

Activities must take place regularly, over extended periods, to support the consolidation and integration of developmental advances. (cf #1) It's not just adults that need to be consistent. Activities and peers, too, need consistency.

#### b) Altruism

Kids must develop the sensitivity and motivation to be responsive to needs of others. This process is fostered by examples set by parents and other role models, and by kids' personal experience in receiving and reacting to altruism, and in demonstrating and being reacted to for altruistic activity.

#### c) Mastery & Excellence with Objects, Symbols, and Ideas

Through diverse activities, kids must develop knowledge and skill in working with symbols, objects, and ideas. These activities are formal and informal, and they may take place in a wide variety of settings (e.g., school, home, church, neighborhood, community centers, museums, shopping malls). It is this knowledge and skill that are the building blocks of mastery and excellence.

### 6: Self as Belonging

On the foundation of relationships and activities, kids develop a sense of themselves as "belonging to" or "being part of" families, groups, communities, and other social networks.

### 7: It Takes a Village: Linkages Between Settings

In order to develop strengths and resilience, kids must experience linkages and cooperation between the various settings (personal; activity; physical/geographic) in which they live. These settings may include – but are not limited to – home, school, after-school activities, church, health- and social service programs, peer groups, jobs, etc.

## Action Principles: Behavioral Examples for Staff / Volunteers

PRINCIPLE	EXAMPLES
<b>Adults Being There</b>	Let kids know when you'll be present, and then BE THERE Behave consistently Follow through (on what you say you'll do; on what you've asked kids to do; on what you want kids to be learning.) If you've assigned kids to work on something, ask them about it next time.
<b>Adult Affection</b>	Greet kids individually, by name Make individual, positive comments that let each kid know you're paying attention to <i>her/him</i> , and to changes / growth
<b>Mutual Relationships</b>	Seek kids' input; show how it influences your behavior (e.g., their choice of songs) Own your own feelings, especially as elicited by kids: Be clear when a kid makes you happy or when their comment hurts you. If what you're doing with a kid isn't working (they're not learning new material or behavior): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•talk <i>with</i> them about their ideas for improvement</li> <li>•create and present your own new suggestions in terms of what you know about this particular child</li> </ul>
<b>Parents; Other Adults</b>	Encourage parents to respond (be specific) to their child's needs at CitySongs (attend Performances, meetings, and parent activities; supervise practicing at home; ensure appropriate performance attire, We as CitySongs staff influence each child's development through enacting <i>all principles</i> Be aware of how important our behavior is to each child
<b>Peers</b>	Clarify when a child has done something to promote another child's development or performance (complimented; helped; comforted; taught) Clarify when a child has done something to harm another's development or performance (hurt; interfered; not followed through) Develop activities to promote positive and diminish negative peer influence
<b>Repetition &amp; Challenge</b>	Balance review of the familiar with presenting new material Clarify that you're repeating a phrase so kids can really nail it Clarify when you're adding something new and more complicated -- and how this builds on or differs from what has come before Work on material that is <i>appropriately</i> challenging, to individual kids and the whole group Continue to add more complicated material and raise performance standards, requiring kids to keep developing new skills and increasing those already developed Use our personal experiences of repetition and challenge as basis for teaching kids
<b>Stability &amp; Content of Activities</b>	
<b>Stability</b>	Maintain regular schedule and predictable routine (e.g., in rehearsals) When something (rehearsal day / time) changes, clarify that this is a change from the norm If last-minute cancellation is necessary, so is a make-up activity, later
<b>Altruism</b>	Think of something nice you can do, in your CitySongs role, for one of the kids; do it. Acknowledge (privately; publicly) when a kid does something nice for another one Encourage specific instances of kid-to-kid helpfulness
<b>Mastery &amp; Ex- cellence with Objects, Symbols and Ideas</b>	Focus on increasing each child's skills; Help child set individual goals for progress, and work toward them Provide individual coaching Suggest individual at-home practice strategies Acknowledge individual progress Supervise homework or individual skill development during Power Hour
<b>Self as Belonging</b>	Articulate group values, goals, and behavioral norms: what <i>this</i> group is all about; what it means and requires to belong to <i>CitySongs</i> as opposed to other activity groups Identify behaviors (e.g., singing better, watching director, supporting other singers) that represent active belonging vs. withdrawing or undermining
<b>It Takes a Village: Linkages Between Settings</b>	Acknowledge child's triumphs in other setting (school; home; church; neighborhood) "I hear you won an award at school;" attend their school play or concert Encourage parents in specific CitySongs participation: attend concert to watch their own child shine; practice lyrics at home with child; facilitate regular attendance Suggest individual kids audition for appropriate outside groups, go hear a specific artist, Listen to specific songs on CD; take private lessons with a particular teacher... Work openly with each child and parent around ensuring performance attire

Specific wording derives from:

Bronfenbrenner, Urie & White, Tara L. (2001). *Programs that Work: What is Youth Development? Youth and Nationhood: An International Challenge*. Downloaded 4/25/01 from The International Youth Foundation Web Site: .../52)Wh=YthDev.html. This monograph describes youth programming that effectively promotes positive youth development. Based on commonalities among successful programs, the authors identify six qualities through which an environment supports basic, positive development in children. They build on these qualities to identify six broad principles according to which children extend early positive development into multifaceted health and strength through adolescence and beyond.

Masten, Ann S. (2001) Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*. 56(3), 227-238. In contrast to nearly a century of research on the causes of and corrections for psychopathology, scholars in the last three decades have conducted complementary research on the positive processes and capacities that promote health and normalcy. Resilience has emerged as the capacity that most consistently supports positive outcomes in the face of adversity. In this paper Masten parallels Bronfenbrenner's thinking in the previous monograph. First, she identifies four adaptive processes through which the young child develops the strengths that permit healthy functioning. She then identifies four global factors that are associated with childhood development of the resilience that guides lifelong health and strength.

Erikson, E. H., Erikson, J. M., & Kivnick, H. Q. (1986). *Vital Involvement in Old Age*. New York: W.W. Norton, Inc. Kivnick, H. Q., & Heier, P.J. (In press) Vital Involvement: A Key to Grounding Child Welfare practice in HBSE Theory. *Journal of Human Behavior and the Social Environment*. Kivnick, H. Q. (2001). Resilience and aging. [Videotape, produced for the series Building Resilience Across the Life Cycle]. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Health. This theory of psychosocial development across the life cycle was first presented in the mid-1900's. It describes eight psychosocial themes as an underlying scaffolding upon which people actively – though not necessarily consciously -- construct their lives. Most recently, these scholars have identified *vital involvement* as the mechanism through which the person and the environment interact with and exert influence on one another. It is through vital involvement with supports in the environment that the person develops essential internal strengths. It is also through vital involvement that the person exercises these burgeoning strengths, influencing others and contributing to community and environment at the social, physical, and metaphysical levels

## ENDNOTES

---

<sup>i</sup> These principles integrate findings from basic and applied research in the fields of human ecology, youth development, resilience, and life-cycle psychosocial development. When fully applied, the principles inform both the design of CitySongs projects and programs and, more immediately, the way all projects and associated tasks are implemented. The way staff members do *all* of their work (e.g., teach music; control behavior; conduct small groups; provide transportation; send messages to parents) should incorporate at least one (and most often several) of these principles. To the extent that staff find themselves doing any of their work in ways that violate any of these principles, we must change those methods in order to correct the violation and incorporate the principles. When staff experience a tension between two program goals (e.g., healthy youth development vs. artistic achievement), we must figure out a way to work toward *both* goals by means of devising an action/strategy that conforms to one or another of the principles without violating others.