

How do you teach respect, diplomacy, and other interpersonal skills among tweens and teens and include loads of fun? You have them plan a party every month! What? Read on....

# Teen Advisory Panel

Twelve year-old Hannah says she's learned to respect other people's decisions once the voting process is complete. "Everyone has good ideas and you should not just shut them down, because it could come out really great." Hannah is one of a 20-member group that makes up the Club's new Youth Advisory Panel. This group works together to plan teen after-hours Club activities each month, but there's a catch. The panel follows a set of diplomatic processes for every decision they make.

Tanya Juarez, Club Teen Director, and facilitator for the group, says since we launched this program in September, "I've witnessed some very interesting transformations among the panel members. The panel is 100% volunteer and any Club teen 6th-12th grade can join. It's a mix of kids who might not normally socially engage, but now they are friends. They have even told me of spending time together when not at the Club. It's really nice to see those relationships blossom."



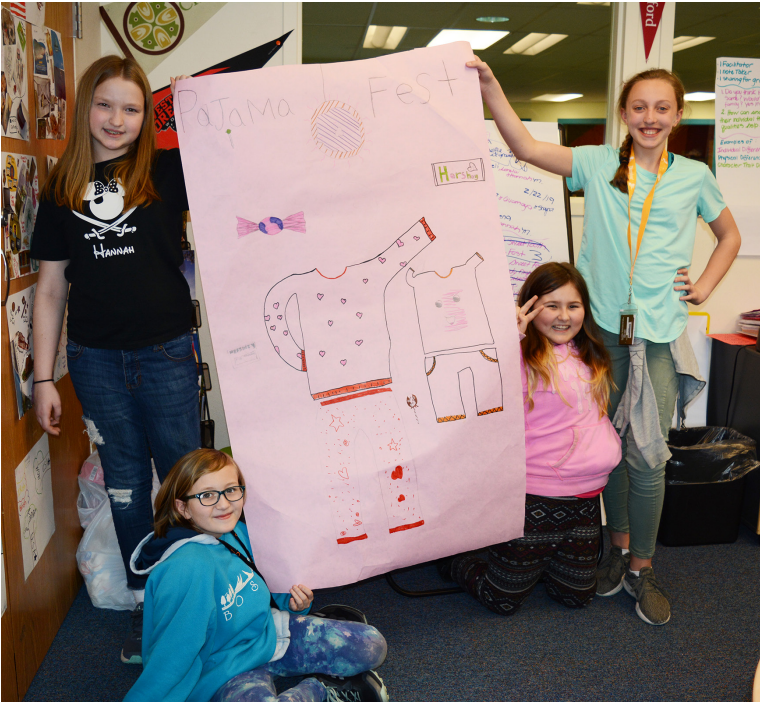
*The poster committee works at their project*

The Youth Advisory Panel is unique in that the kids have 100% ownership of the After Hours at the Club event planning and implementation of all activities. They decide what music to play, what food to serve, the games they will provide, and even how to advertise the event.

Each activity includes a sub-committee to complete the vote-approved task list. Everyone participates, and according to 6th grade Shaeli, "Being on the panel is valuable to me. I'm learning to work together as a team, and that is really important—especially when I grow up and get a job." Salina, 7th grade panel member, further explains, "Not only is it fun, I've learned to accept people's likes and dislikes. I get to contribute my own ideas, then others contribute, and then we vote. Whatever idea gets the most votes wins, and it's important to accept the decision. Then we form sub-committees and work within our group. After that, we get to make posters and flyers and advertise for teens to come."

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When the sub-committee meets, further planning takes place. They designate a note-taker, so when they return to the full panel, they can present their ideas, and everyone gets to vote again. Most activities require a budget, so the kids research for the best prices for the supplies they need, and decisions are made as a voting group.



Tanya says, "As the facilitator, I help the kids by teaching them the diplomatic process, but then I step back and let them perform it. I coach them along the way, but as time goes by, there is less and less I have to explain. They are learning skills centered around an understanding of other people and being sensitive to their opinions, beliefs, ideas, and feelings, all while taking on new responsibilities, making new friends and having lots of fun."

Left to Right: Lorelai, (Sitting) Hannah, Shaeli, and Salina, show off the event poster they are working on.